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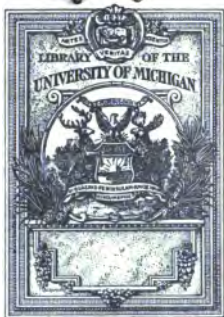
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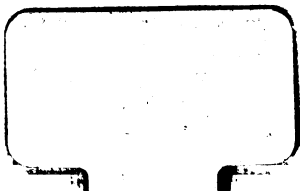
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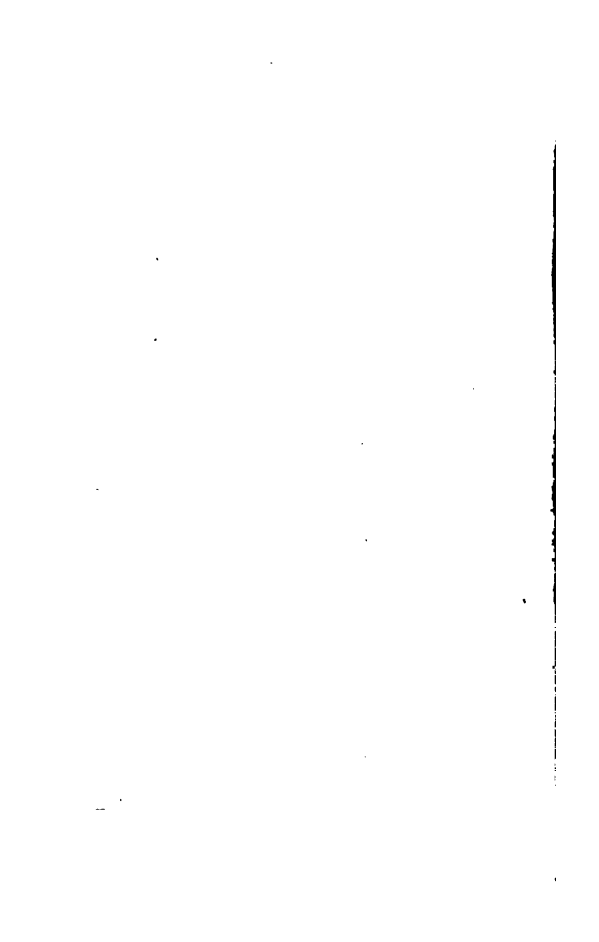


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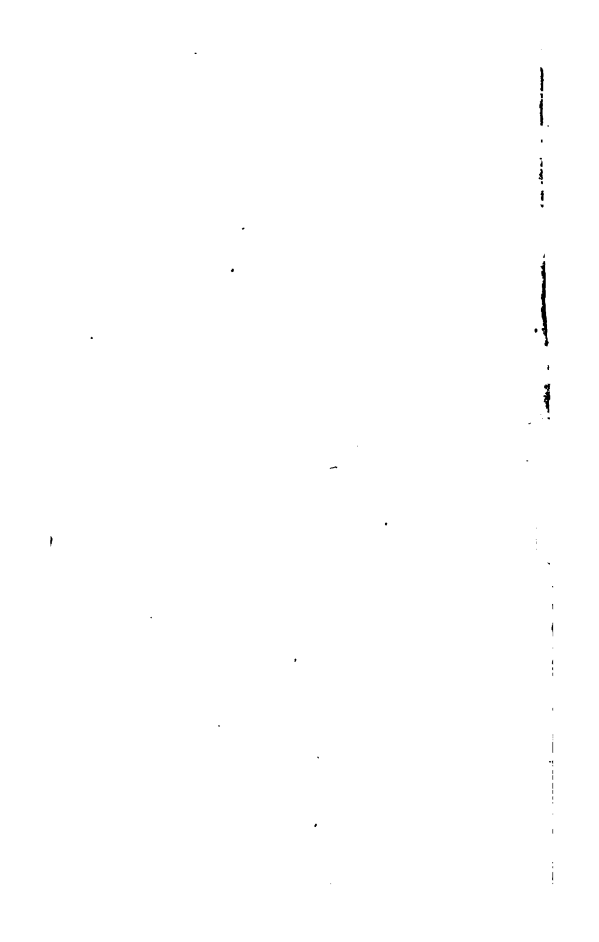
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DR. OWEN'S
GRACE AND DUTY
OF BEING
SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

RECOMMENDATION.

The writings of the Puritans are a mine of wealth, in which any one who will submit to some degree of labour, will find himself well rewarded for his pains. In particular, the writings of Dr. Owen, Mr. Howe, and Mr. Flavel, well deserve this character. Of Dr. Owen's there are two Pieces which I would especially recommend to the reader's perusal, one on Heavenly Mindedness, abridged by Dr. Mayo ; the other, the Mortification of Sin in Believers.

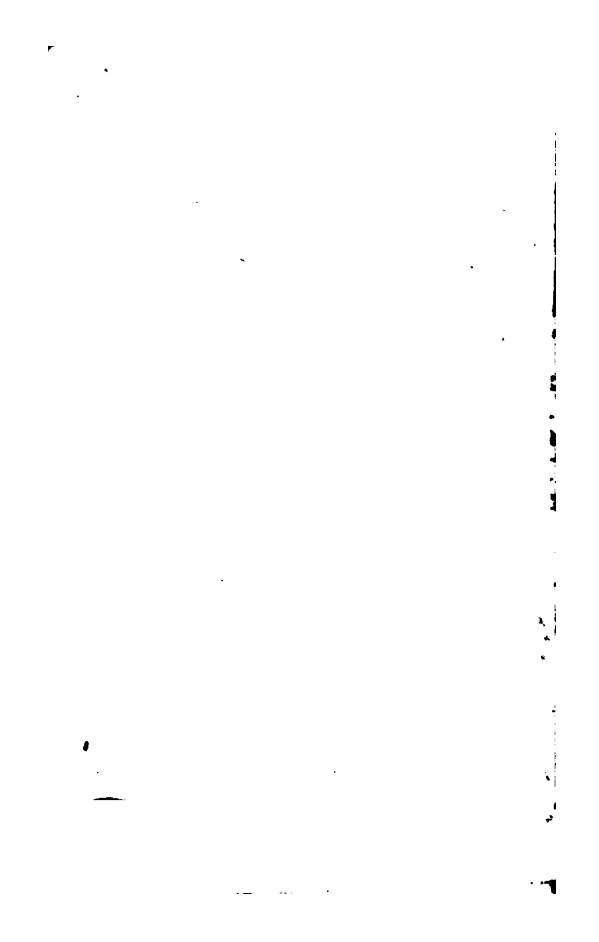
Vide Mr. WILBERFORCE'S VIEW.

THE
GRACE AND DUTY
OF BEING
SPIRITUALLY MINDED,
DECLARED
AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

BY
JOHN OWEN, D.D.

JAMES NISBET,
BERNERS STREET, LONDON.

M.DCCC.XXVIII.



PREFACE.

THE writings of the learned and pious Dr. Owen, are so well known and esteemed, that no eulogium on his character and abilities can be necessary to introduce the present abridgment into the world. When alive, he was remarkably blessed in the work of the ministry, and deservedly honoured both by friends and strangers; and now being dead, he yet speaketh in his excellent treatises, to the edification and comfort of mankind, and his praise will be great in every age.

Among his many printed works, THIS on the Grace and Duty of *Spiritual Mindedness*, shines with peculiar lustre; being admirably adapted to search the heart, to detect the hypocrite, to instruct, strengthen, and comfort the real Christian, and to quicken him in his advances towards heaven and glory. Viewing the performance in this light, and observing

with continual sorrow the increase and spread of evil principles, and the carnal security of professors, with their inordinate attachment to earthly things, by which thousands of souls miscarry; observing also, the growing indifference of many towards religious exercises and holy duties; and their readiness to listen to unstable or artful men, who teach their followers to disregard the frame and disposition of their minds, and, in effect, to regard nothing but faith, putting off all trial of their state, thoughts, and actions, to the last day; observing how many content themselves with a bare attendance in the sanctuary of God, and rest on their public religious duties, without examining into their principles and motives; observing the superstitious attachment of many unto external forms and rites, and their excessive zeal for them, while they neglect justice, mercy, and brotherly love: in brief, observing the same manner of conversation and conduct among professors in the present day, as the reverend author of this treatise lamented in his; the EDITOR could not help wishing, that this valuable and useful discourse on

Spiritual Mindedness was universally known, and rendered more easy to purchase.

He was informed, there were but few copies to be procured at any price; and if the whole work had been republished, it would still have been too expensive for many who want to be instructed in the great duty here inculcated, with which are connected life and peace eternal: these reasons, together with the repeated desires of friends zealous of promoting the spiritual welfare of their fellow-immortals, engaged him to attempt the present abridgment.

All who are acquainted with Dr. Owen's Works must be sensible, that as he exhausted every subject he undertook, so there were many repetitions, the same thoughts frequently occurring in different places; his style also, like that of most of his contemporaries, was rather prolix, and his method often intricate, and not easy to be remembered; which things, to a judicious reader, must be tedious and unpleasant. The Editor hath therefore taken the liberty of omitting what appeared to be redundant, of transposing

some passages, of reducing the numbers of chapters, and also of making a little alteration in the Doctor's method and style ; but the reader may be assured that nothing material hath been omitted ; that the Author's real sentiments are preserved, and it is hoped his spirit also.

To recal Christian professors to that strict mortification, to that separation from the world and its sinful customs, to that contemplation of, and delight in spiritual things, to that heavenly mindedness, which the gospel of Christ requires, was the original design of this work ; and that these happy fruits may attend this abridgment of it, is the Editor's desire, and shall be his daily prayer.

THE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I THINK it necessary to give the reader a brief account of the nature and design of the following treatise, as it may direct him in the reading, and will be some kind of apology for myself in publishing it.

The thoughts here communicated, were originally private meditations, in a season when I was unable to do any thing for the edification of others, and far from expectation I ever should any more. When God was pleased to restore me, as I had received some benefit from this exercise of my thoughts, I insisted on the same subject in the instruction of my congregation; apprehending also, that the duties set forth and enforced in the whole discourse, were always seasonable to be declared, and urged on the minds of pro-

fessors. Leaving others to choose their own methods, I acknowledge these are the two things, by which I regulate the whole course of my ministry: to impart those TRUTHS, of whose power I hope to have had a real experience; and to press those DUTIES, which present temptations, or other circumstances, do render necessary and deserving peculiar attention. As in the general work of the ministry the whole counsel of God is to be declared, so we are never to fight uncertainly as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random without a certain mark or design. A good knowledge of the flock, whereof we are overseers, and a due consideration of their wants, temptations, light, graces, strength, and weakness, are requisite: and when the preparation of the word to be preached, proceeds also from zeal for God's glory, and compassion on human souls; when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reference unto God, whose word it is, and of authority towards the hearers, together with a deep sense of that great account, which both they who preach, and they that hear the word preached, must shortly give be-

fore the judgment seat of Christ, THEN there may be a pleasing expectation of a blessed issue.

The first reason why I judged the preaching and publishing this plain discourse ON SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS, not unseasonable at this time, is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men, and the various ways of insinuation, whereby it filleth them; and when the world fills the thoughts, the affections will be soon entangled, grace weakened, and the soul in danger of eternal ruin. Thoughts of the world and of earthly things are unavoidable and commendable, if their multiplicity and vehemence do not so divert the mind, as to leave it no room or time for the entertainment of spiritual things: but how many men talk, and act, as if the world, which comparatively is nothing, was their all! The world hath, as it were, transformed the mind into its own image and likeness, and when such persons, or any who are full of earthly affections, attend to or perform spiritual duties, it must be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to stir up any grace to a due

exercise ; nor can the best of us be delivered at this season from so great an evil, without a watchful endeavour to preserve our minds, in the constant contemplation of heavenly things, proceeding from the prevalent adherence of the affections to them, as will soon appear.

Again, there are such pregnant evidences of the prevalency of a worldly frame of spirit, in many who make profession of religion, that it is high time they were called to a due consideration, how opposite they are to the power and spirit of that religion which they profess. Every way by which such a frame of spirit may be proved to prevail in the generality of professors, is manifest to all ; in their affected ornaments and dress, in their manner of conversation, their waste of time, their over-liberal entertainments, bordering to excess, and in sundry other things, such a conformity to the world appears, (though severely forbidden,) that it is hard to make a distinction ; and as these things manifest a predominancy of carnal affections in the mind, so, whatever may be pretended, they are inconsistent with spiritual life and peace.

To call men off from this evil frame of heart, to discover the sin and danger of it, to supply the thoughts and affections with better objects, to direct to ways and means of effecting it, to discover and press that exercise of soul which is required of all professors, if they purpose life and peace, is the design and work of the following treatise; and however weak the attempt, it hath these two advantages—it is seasonable, and sincerely intended; nay, should this be its only success—to provoke others possessed of more time and greater abilities, to oppose the vehement and too successful insinuations of the world in the minds of professing Christians, my labour will not be lost. Things have come to that pass, that a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, and of other appointed means, is necessary to recal professors to that strict mortification, that separation from the ways of the world, that heavenly mindedness, that contemplation of spiritual things, and delight in them, which the gospel of Christ doth require; else we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave our eternal state

very uncertain. To direct and provoke men to that which is the only remedy of these sore evils, and which is the alone means of giving them a view and foretaste of eternal glory, is the design of this discourse, which is recommended to the grace of God for the benefit of every reader.

CHAPTER I.

ROM. viii. 6.

“ But to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.”

THE expression in our translation is a little different from that in the original: in the margin we read, the “minding of the spirit,” and there is a great variety in reading of the words *φρονημα το πνευματος*, as the wisdom, the mind, the thought, the contrivance, the discretion of the spirit, and that which the spirit favoureth; but all our English translations from the very first (Tindal’s) have constantly used the term “spiritually minded;” nor do I know any words, by which the emphasis of the original, and the design of the apostle, can be better expressed.

The whole verse hath two propositions, containing a double antithesis; one

in their subjects, the other in their predicates; the opposite subjects are the "minding of the flesh, and the minding of the spirit;" or the being carnally minded, and spiritually minded. These two do constitute the two states of mankind; unto one or other of which, every other individual doth belong. He is under the ruling conduct of the *flesh*, or of the *spirit*. As to the qualities expressed by these terms, there may be a mixture of them in the same person, there is so in all the regenerate: in them "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh;" Gal. v. 17: but these contrary actings in the same subject do not constitute distinct states. There is no middle state, though there are different degrees in each of them as to good and evil; where either flesh or spirit hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state.

It is of the greatest moment, that we know to which we appertain; for the difference between these two states is great, the distance in a manner infinite; because an eternity of blessedness or misery depends upon it; for the minding of the

flesh is *death*, but the minding of the spirit is *life and peace*.

I. To be "*carnally minded is death*." Death, as absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal: it is *formully*, death spiritual; they that are carnally minded, who fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are by nature children of wrath, and are penally under the power of spiritual death; they are "dead in sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh." Eph. ii. 1, 3; Col. ii. 13. It is likewise *meritoriously*, death eternal; "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; the wages of sin is death." Rom. viii. 13, and vi. 23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so dreadful a sentence and doom on the carnal mind, is, because the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject unto the law of God, and they that are in the flesh, cannot please God. If it be thus with the carnal mind, no wonder that to be carnally minded is death. It is not meet it should be any thing else: that which is enmity against God, is under his curse. But in opposition hereto, it is affirmed,

II. That to be "*SPIRITUALLY MINDED*

is life and peace." Let us particularly see what this minding of the spirit is, and then, how it is life and peace.

What is implied in minding of the Spirit? The word SPIRIT is often used in a double sense; as for the *Spirit of God*, or the *Holy Ghost*, who is, in the context and other places, spoken of as the efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies that Christians do enjoy; and the word is also used for THAT PRINCIPLE of spiritual life which is communicated to all real Christians by the Holy Ghost; "For that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. Most probably, *spirit* is in the text used in the latter sense; for that which is born of the spirit, the principle of spiritual life, which, in its nature, actings, and operations, is opposed unto the flesh, that corrupt principle of depraved nature, whence all evil thoughts and actions do proceed. Unto this *spirit*, or holy vital principle of spiritual life and new obedience, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, there is *φρονημα* ascribed, which strongly expresseth the *actual exercise* of the power of the mind; hence we translate *φρονειμα*, "to think,"

Rom. xii. 9 ; it signifies, to "set the affections," Col. iii. 2, or to have such an apprehension of things, as to cleave unto them with our affection. Again, "to mind," Phil. iii. 19, mind earthly things, which includes that relish which the mind finds in the things it is fixed upon. No wheredoth it design only a notional conception of things ; but chiefly the engagement of the affections to the things discerned and apprehended by the mind : so that the minding of the spirit is the *actual exercise of the mind*, as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual light and life in its conception of spiritual things, and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savour in them, wherewith it is pleased and satisfied.

But let it be observed, this definition of the "minding of the spirit," is not spoken of as to what it is in itself absolutely, but with respect to its power and prevalence in us, significantly rendered *spiritually minded*: the mind is continually acted or influenced thereby to thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and

satisfaction ; so, on the contrary, it is the same when men mind earthly things : therefore to be spiritually minded includes three things :

1. The *actual exercise of the mind in its thoughts*. But they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; they think on them, their desires are after them, and their contrivances are continually for them ; but they that are after the spirit, mind the things of the spirit ; their desires are after, their thoughts and meditations are on, things spiritual and heavenly.

2. This minding of the *spirit resides habitually in the affections*, so that spiritual mindedness is the exercise of the thoughts on, and aspirations of the soul in, its desires after spiritual things, proceeding from the love of its affections, and their engagements unto them.

3. A *complacency of mind*, from that gust or delight which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness to its constitution, frame, inclinations, and desires. There is a *SALT* in spiritual things to the renewed mind, while to others, they are like the white of an egg, without taste or

savour. Speculative notions about divine things, when alone, are sapless and barren. It is in this savour of them, that the sweetness and satisfaction of the spiritual life consist: thus, we taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite; and this is the only proper foundation of that joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory.

As these three things concur in minding of the spirit, or constitute a person spiritually minded; so you must have remarked the two following important truths as directly contained in the text:

1. That spiritual mindedness is the great distinguishing character of true believers, or real Christians, from all others; and,

2. Where any are spiritually minded, there alone is life and peace; what these are, what their excellency and pre-eminence above all other things, and how they are the effects of spiritual mindedness, will be shewn hereafter.

Either of these considerations is sufficient to demonstrate of how great con-

cernment to us this subject is; and must excite us to inquire diligently, whether we are spiritually minded, or not. There are many professors, who greatly deceive themselves in this important point; they admit of sacred truths, with their understanding; they assent to them, yea, they approve and often commend them; but admit not their power in and over the conscience, nor judge of their state by them, which proves their ruin, and demonstrates that they believe not one syllable of Christianity as they ought. Again, there are others who, "like a man beholding his face in a glass, goeth his way and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." James i. 24. The word of God represents unto them their spiritual state and condition; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them, as the sacred oracles declare: but immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, and taken up with other things, and they forget in a moment the representation of themselves, and their situation: wherefore, all that will or can be mentioned on this subject, will be utterly lost, unless a

firm persuasion hereof be fixed in our breasts, unless we are really affected with, and under the power of, this momentous truth, "that to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Whatever our light, knowledge, or profession may be, destitute of minding the spirit, there is no real interest in, nor any claim to, life and peace.

I shall now more practically open the nature of this duty, which may be considered either as to the ESSENCE of it, or its degrees; for one man may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time, than at another. In the first way it is opposed unto carnal mindedness; in the other, unto being earthly minded.

Carnal mindedness is opposed unto being spiritually minded, as to its nature and essence: where a man, as to the substance and being of the grace and duty, is not spiritually minded, he must be carnal; dead in tresspasses and sins, and obnoxious unto death eternal; and as this is the principal foundation on which we proceed, so it demonstrates

16 *The Grace and Duty of*

the indispensable necessity of that frame of mind, here declared and enjoined.

Earthly mindedness may be considered two ways; as **ABSOLUTE**, when the love of earthly things is wholly predominant in the mind; this is a branch from the root, an operation of the carnal mind in one especial way, and is as exclusive of salvation as carnal mindedness. When there is in any a predominant love of earthly things, that person may be truly styled earthly minded, and he hath no interest in the frame of spirit intended in the text: but, alas! is not this evidently the case of the greatest part of nominal Christians, let them pretend what they will to the contrary?

Again, earthly mindedness consists in an **INORDINATE AFFECTION** to the things of this world: this is sinful and ought to be mortified, but it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance or essence of the grace inquired after. Some who are truly spiritually minded, yet may (for a time at least) have such inordinate affections to, and care about, earthly things, that, compared with what they

ought to be, and might be, they may be justly denominated earthly minded: they are so in respect of those degrees of spiritual mindedness which they should aim at, and might attain; and they do not consider, that where this inordinate affection is, the other can never flourish; spiritual mindedness can never advance to any eminent degree. And yet this is the *Zoar* of many professors, that little one in which they would be spared. They would avoid that species of earthly mindedness which is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded; such a frame they know is inconsistent with salvation, and absolutely exclusive of life and peace: but there is a *degree* in being earthly minded, which they persuade themselves, their interest, advantages, relations and occasions of life do call for, and in which they would be a little indulged; flattering themselves that this will by no means disparage their profession, and is very consistent with being spiritually minded; though it may be short of that height, or contrary to those degrees in that grace, which are recommended to them. And the truth is, they

have too many companions to fear any reproach or severe reflection upon themselves : the multitude of the guilty takes away the sense and shame of the guilt. Professors cannot but esteem spiritual mindedness in its most eminent and exalted degrees, as excellent and desirable, and in general think well of those who attain it; but it is for them who are more at leisure than they are: their circumstances and connexions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

As it is to be feared, that far the greatest number of those who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, and who willingly neglect endeavours after further degrees of grace, which their light, convictions, and the means they enjoy, do suggest them as reasonable, and of the utmost importance, are indeed *carnally minded*; so, to obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing in the declaration of this duty, but what is incumbent on all that believe in Christ, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before God.

CHAP. II.

“The grace and duty of spiritual mindedness, stated in and evidenced by our thoughts.”

HAVING, in a general way, explained that frame of mind recommended by the apostle in the text, we proceed to inquire more particularly into its nature, according to the former description and method. It will be my great concern to show you what it is, and how it evidences itself: so as that we may form a right judgment whether it is in us or not; and woe be to them who neglect or despise these things on any pretence whatever; for this is the word, by which we shall soon be judged, “To be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.”

Although the foundation of the whole duty lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence to spiritual things;

yet as the THOUGHTS are the first genuine actings of the mind, according to the prevalence of the affections, and as they make the best discovery of what nature is the spring from which they arise, I shall begin with them.

I. *Thoughts*, as proceeding from spiritual affections, are the first things which characterize spiritual mindedness, and whereby it evidences itself: our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. In the spring we see trees covered with blossoms, but multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing; yea often, where there are most blossoms, there is *least fruit*: however, there is no fruit, of whatever kind or sort, whether good or bad, but comes from some of those blossoms. Thus the mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms; most of them fall off, come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes, where the mind most abounds with them, there is the least fruit. The sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them; but still there is no fruit we bring forth, be it good or bad, but proceeds from some of these thoughts. They give the

best measure and strongest evidence of the frame of the mind ; " As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Prov. xxiii. 7. In case of strong or violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object ; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts runs quite another way than when he is in safety : but in general, *voluntary thoughts* are the best indication of the frame of our minds ; as the nature of the soil is judged by the grass it produces, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts : they are the original acting of the soul, the way by which the heart empties the treasure that is in it. Every man's heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil. Whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is ; his treasure is opening and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted ; it hath a fountain both in nature and grace, which no expense can diminish, yea it increaseth by it. Whether it be good or evil, the treasure of the heart increases and abounds by expense and

exercise, and the principal way in which it exerts or spends itself, is by the *thoughts*. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked; if it hath that good treasure GRACE, it is displayed by thoughts suitable to its nature.

Wherefore these *voluntary thoughts* which the mind of its own accord is apt for, and naturally hath recourse to, best indicate the true frame thereof. Indeed, men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings, which give no due measure of their inward frame; so ministers, whose calling and work is to study the Scriptures, and to preach their contents to others, they cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things, and yet may be, and oftentimes are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be *forced by their office* to think of them evening and morning, early and late, and yet their minds thereby be no way rendered or proved spiritual. It were well if all who were preachers would diligently examine themselves herein. Men may read many chapters every day of their lives, and ministers may diligently study and preach,

and yet be far from spiritual mindedness. But as some men from their callings in life, and as all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, more or less, and yet we know that all are not spiritually minded; we must see what is requisite, to render our thoughts a certain indication of the state of our minds; and the two following particulars are the chief and essential:

I. That they may be natural, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions; and,

II. That they abound and abide in us, our minds being filled with them.

I. The thoughts that display and evidence the true state of the mind, are such as are NATURAL, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise solely from men's principles and dispositions, not suggested, or excited by any outward objects. Such in wicked men are those actings of their lusts, whereby they entice and seduce themselves. James i. 14. Their lusts stir up thoughts, leading them to make provision for the flesh; these are their inward thoughts, the first natural

egress and genuine acting of the habitual disposition of the soul.

Thus in *covetous men*, there are two sorts of thoughts, by which their covetousness acts: the first occasioned by outward objects; so it was with Achan, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them." Joshua vii. 21. His sight of, with an opportunity of possessing them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him; and so it is with others every day, whose affairs call them to converse with the objects of their lusts; and some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts to which their minds are not habitually inclined; therefore, when known, it is our duty to avoid such objects. But the same sort of persons have also thoughts of this nature arising from themselves only, from their own disposition and inclination, without any outward provocations. "The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity," Isaiah xxxii. 6; and this he doth, even as "the liberal man deviseth liberal things," from his own disposi-

tion. So the *unclean* person, respecting the satisfaction of his lusts, hath some thoughts occasioned by external objects; revellings, intemperance, dancing with bold and lewd company, unchaste novels, plays, &c., greatly contribute to excite those thoughts, and provoke them to the wicked service of his lusts; but he hath an *habitual spring* of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto; hence the Apostle Peter says, that such persons "have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." 2 Peter ii. 14. Their own affections make them restless in their thoughts and contrivances about sin. So is it with those who are given to *excess in wine* or strong drink; they have pleasing thoughts raised in them, from the objects of their lust standing in their view; hence Solomon gave that advice against the occasion of them, "Look not thou on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup; at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Prov. xxiii. 31, 32. But it is their own habitual disposition which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction

of their lusts : and so is it in other cases which might be mentioned. The thoughts of this latter sort, are men's inward, natural, voluntary thoughts ; and if it be so on the one side, as unto the *carnal mind*, it is so on the other as to the spiritual ; there is an habitual disposition in the *spiritually minded*, a living fulness of spiritual things in their minds, that continually and voluntarily springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

Hence doth our Saviour give us the great description of SPIRITUAL LIFE : it is " a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 12. The spirit of Christ, with his [!]graces residing in the heart, are a well of living water ; not useless like other wells of water, unless there are instruments to draw withal ; but of its own accord, it sends out refreshing water, and is continually springing up to the use and comfort of all that have it within them. It of and from itself, without any external influence, inclines and disposes the soul unto spiritual thoughts and actions which tend to eternal life. The pious thoughts of the *spiritually minded*, arise, and naturally

proceed from the inward principle and disposition of the soul; and where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no evidence of that which is inquired after. Men may have many and frequent thoughts of spiritual things, which do not arise from this principle, but may be justly resolved into two other causes, *inward force* and *outward occasions*.

1. *Inward force*, as it may be styled: this is by conviction. Convictions put a kind of force upon the mind, or cause it to act contrary to its habitual inclination. It is the nature of water to descend, but apply an instrument that shall compress it, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion; but as soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately, descending towards its centre: so it is with men's thoughts, they are earthly, their natural motion is downwards to the earth, and the things thereof; but when any powerful conviction presseth on the mind, it forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards to heavenly things, and the soul will think much and frequently of them, as if that was its proper motion and course; but as

soon as the power of the conviction wears off, the thoughts return again to their old course, as the water tends downward.

This state is particularly described, Psalm lxxviii. 35 : "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they turned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer: nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, and the views of death, or under conviction of sin from the preaching of the word, will endeavour to think and meditate on spiritual things, and be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them, more than they do; but as deliverance approaches, so these thoughts decay and disappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place to them any more, its habit and inclination is another way, and the man no longer regards spiritual things, than convictions impress him.

But if our thoughts of spiritual things do rise or fall, according as we are under

rebukes from God, in our own persons or relations, or in fears of death and the like; if these thoughts decline, as our occasional convictions and their causes do wear off, or are removed; we certainly have attained but a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all. Water that floweth from a living spring, runs equally and constantly, unless obstructed or diverted; but that which is from thunder-showers, runs furiously for a season, and is quickly dried up: so are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace, they are even and constant, unless interrupted for a season by temptations; but those which are excited by the thunder of convictions, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay.

2. *Outward occasions.* Spiritual thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from outward means. Where you till or manure land, if it brings forth plentiful crops, it is an evidence that the soil itself is good; the dressing only gives occasion and advantage to the earth to put forth its own fertile

virtue; but if in tilling of land, much dung is laid upon it, and it brings forth but here and there a handful where the manure lay, doubtless the soil is barren, and we say it brings forth nothing of itself: the means I shall treat of, are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which helps it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power: they stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires; but in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve here and there, or now and then, to excite spiritual thoughts, which give no evidence of a gracious heart, or spiritual mind.

I. One of these means or occasions, is *the preaching of the word*. It is observed of many in the gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly upon the preaching thereof, which could not be without many thoughts about spiritual things; and yet they were all hypocrites concerning whom these things were spoken, and were never spiritually minded: and we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes daily. The cause of this miscarriage is assigned by our Saviour: "He that receiveth the

seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and receiveth it with joy, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while." Matt. xiii. 20, 21. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of spiritual things have any internal root, whereon they should grow, or proceed from any principle in themselves. I here speak not of them who are either despisers of what they hear, or way-side hearers, who understand nothing, of what is preached, and immediately lose all sense of, and all thoughts about it ; but I mean such who attend with some diligence, and receive the word with some joy. These cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things, though for the most part they are like to waters that run after a shower of rain : they pour on, as if they proceeded from some strong living spring, whereas they have none at all, and when the waters of the shower are spent, the channel is dry, nothing in it but stones and dirt. Thus when the doctrine of the word distils on such persons, it gives a course sometimes greater and sometimes less to their thoughts, respecting spiritual things ; but they have not in them a well of water

springing up to everlasting life, wherefore these thoughts soon pass away, and nothing remains but earth.

It must be observed, that the best and most spiritual minded may, and ought to have their thoughts of spiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed by the preaching of the word; it is one grand end of its dispensation; but where men have no other spiritual thoughts, but what are occasioned by hearing the word preached, such thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually minded. The thoughts which proceed from an inward principle, excited to due exercise, may be easily distinguished from those which are only occasionally suggested to the mind, by this outward means: as (1.) they are actings of faith and love towards the things that are preached; they belong to our "receiving the truth in the love thereof;" love respects the goodness of the things and not merely the truth of the propositions expressed in them: the other thoughts are only the sense of the mind, as affected with light and truth, without any cordial love to the things themselves. (2.) They are accompanied with compla-

ency of soul, arising from a love and experience of the power of them, and their suitableness to the new nature or spiritual principle within them; for when we find that so indeed it is in us as it is in the word of God, and that this is that to which we would be more conformable; it gives a secret complacency and much pleasure to the mind, and is a means of spiritual growth: but the other thoughts, which are only occasional, have none of these concomitants or effects: they are dry and barren, unless it be in a few words or transient discourse.

II. *The duty of prayer*, is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it, is to excite and draw forth the principle of grace in the heart, to a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with suitable affections; the persons who design not this end in prayer, know not at all what it is to pray. All sorts of professors have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are convinced it is their own duty to pray every day, both in their families and otherwise: now it is hard to conceive, how men can constantly join with others in prayer,

34. *The Grace and Duty of*

much more how they can pray themselves, and yet be destitute of spiritual thoughts; they must have thoughts of spiritual things every day, but it is possible they may have no root, only occasional impressions on the mind, from the outward performance of the duty.

Spiritual thoughts may be excited in a person by the exercise of his gifts, the spiritual improvement of natural faculties and abilities; and it is impossible but they must. A man indeed may read a long prayer that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them; for there is no exercise of any faculty of the mind requisite unto such reading, but only to attend unto the words that are to be read; this *may be*; I do not say that it is always, or that it must be so: but in the exercise of gifts, there must be an exercise of reason, by invention, judgment, and memory, and consequently thoughts of spiritual things; yet may they all be *merely occasional*, from the present performance of the duty, without any living spring or exercise of grace: in such a course may men of tolerable gifts con-

tinue all their days, to the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

This being evident from Scripture and experience, it highly concerns us to ask, how we shall know whether the thoughts we have of spiritual things in or by prayer, do arise from gifts only, or are influenced from a living genuine principle in our hearts? A case this of great importance, and which I shall endeavour briefly to resolve.

It is an ancient and true complaint, that spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty; not that they are so in themselves, for they all come forth from the Father of lights, and are full of light, order, beauty, and wisdom; the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things is in and of themselves. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered, and disordered in their apprehensions of spiritual things, by ignorance, temptations, and prejudices of all kinds: there is also a great similitude between temporary faith, and that which is saving, and between gifts and grace in their operations; and fear, and self-love.

with the prevalency of temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind, and to pervert its judgment; and hence it is to be feared the greatest part of mankind do constantly deceive themselves, and put off all trials of their state, thoughts, and actions, to that at the last day. But if men are not willing to deceive themselves, and accordingly, impartially and severely examine and try the frames and actings of the mind in religious duties by the word of truth, and speak that plainly to their souls which the word speaks; and to their own diligent inquiry add frequent prayers unto God, that he would search and try them, and discover to them the true frame of their hearts; I no way doubt but they would soon come to assured satisfaction, whether their spiritual thoughts in prayer proceed from an inward vital principle, or whether they come from occasional impressions by means of the duty. In general we are assured, "that he that believeth, hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 10. Sincere faith will be its own evidence, and its fruits will evidence themselves, if tried impartially by the

divine word ; but if men content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an examination of their principles, frames, and motives, no wonder they walk at an absolute uncertainty.

To give some satisfaction in a case of such great importance and necessity, now hypocrisy hath made such an inroad on profession, and gifts have imitated and usurped over grace in its principal operations—observe,

(1.) When the soul finds a *spiritual complacency*, an inward pleasure in and after prayer and other duties, it is an evidence that grace had a share and influence in its spiritual thoughts and desires. The prophet Jeremiah received a gracious message from God full of excellent promises, and pathetic exhortations unto the Church ; “ upon this, *said he*, I awaked, and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me.” Chap. xxxi. 26. God's message had so composed his spirits, that he was serene and quiet like a man asleep ; but afterwards he stirs up himself to review and consider what had been spoken to him, and, saith he, “ my sleep was sweet unto me.” I found a *sweet complacency*

in, and great refreshment to my soul, from what I heard and received : so it is often with a soul that hath had real communion with God in prayer ; at the time, and afterward on the consideration of it, how is the Christian delighted and refreshed ! This holy complacency and sweet repose of mind, is the foundation of every Christian's delight in the duty of prayer ; they do not pray merely because it is their duty, nor because they so stand in need of it, that else they could not live ; but they have delight in it, and to keep them therefrom is all one as to keep them from their daily food and natural refreshment. Now we may use, but can have no delight in any thing, unless we have experienced some complacency and rest ; and the soul's delight in prayer, ariseth from the near approach that is made in it unto God, the fountain and centre of all spiritual rest and complacency ; and the fruit hereof is, he makes them that thus seek him, to drink of the river of his pleasures, the satisfying refreshing streams of his grace and goodness ; they approach unto him, as to the fountain of life, to drink or obtain renewed communications

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of life and grace, and this not in vain; hence arises that spiritual complacency. Though I might add, that a blessed satisfaction results to the soul, from the due exercise of faith, hope, and love, graces in which the life of the new creature doth chiefly consist; the exercise of these graces doth compose and refresh the mind, (even in mourning and godly sorrow for sin there is joy,) and it prepares and makes the soul meet to receive more supplies of grace from above; and thus conscience is enabled likewise to bear testimony to our sincerity in the aim, performance, and end of the duty, which greatly strengthens the mind's repose, and adds to its complacency and joy.

If we have no experience of these things, it is evident we walk at random in the best of our duties, and neither profit by, nor give glory unto God in it; but yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself on us, in the place of the best of graces—*self-pleasing* in the performance of the duty, a vile effect of spiritual pride. A secret self-pleasing, because of enlargement in expressions, or from an appre-

hension that others are affected and pleased with our manner and matter, before we are aware turns into pride and a noxious elation of mind, and is directly opposite to that spiritual complacency just mentioned. One is in God alone, the other is in self; *that* draws forth the favour of all graces, *this* covers and buries them all, if there be any in the soul; *that* fills the soul eminently with humility, *this* with proud self-conceit; *that* casts out all remembrance of what we have done ourselves, retaining only a sense of what we have received from God, the impressions of his love and grace; but *this* base pretender blots out all remembrance of what we have freely received from God, and retains only what we have done ourselves: wherever this is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

(2.) It is a sure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer, are from an internal gracious spring, and not merely occasioned by the duty, when we find the *daily fruit* and advantage of them, especially in promoting a watchful, humble, holy frame of mind. Innumerable

are the advantages and effects of prayer; growth in grace and consolation is the substance of them. Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be spiritual growth: if a man eats his daily food, let him eat never so much, or so often, if he be not nourished by it, his body is under the power of prevalent distempers; and so with respect to the spiritual constitution, for a man to be earnest in prayer, but not thrive in the use of this food of the new creature, is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions, and of his not being spiritually minded in prayer. He who prays as he ought, will endeavour to live as he prays; this no one can do who doth not with diligence keep his heart to the things for which he prays; to pray earnestly, and live carelessly, is proclaiming aloud, "I am not spiritually minded." Hereby then, we shall know what is the spring of those spiritual thoughts which occupy the mind in prayer; if the thoughts lead or influence to a constant daily watch for the preservation of that frame of spirit, and of those inclinations to spiritual things for which we pray, they are from an internal spring

of grace; but if there be generally an unsuitableness in our minds, to what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the gift may be in exercise, but the grace is wanting. A man may be every day on the Exchange, and there talk diligently and earnestly about trade and merchandize, but when he comes home he thinks no more of them, having no interest in them, and may be also very poor, notwithstanding all his talk and parade. So he may be spiritually very poor, who on occasion is fervent in prayer, if when he retires he is not careful about the matter, and diligent for an interest in it.

(3.) When spiritual affections do excite and animate the gift of prayer, and not the gift impress the affections, then are we spiritually minded in the duty. Gifts are servants, not rulers in the mind; bestowed on us to be serviceable unto grace, not to lead but to follow it, and to be ready to assist its operations. This is the natural order; grace habitually inclines and disposes the heart to prayer, providence and rule give the occasions for its exercise, and sense of duty calls for preparation; so grace coming

into actual exercise, gifts step in with their assistance; but if they lead, all is out of order. Indeed, sometimes, it may be otherwise: a person indisposed and lifeless (on conviction of duty, and in the way of obedience) engaging in prayer, may in and by the gift, have his affections excited, and graces engaged in their proper work; it may be so, but let men take heed how they trust unto this method; for there may be little or nothing of the exercise of true grace in all their fervour and stir of affections; but when faith, love, holy reverence, and gracious desires, stir up the gift unto exercise, and call in its assistance, then is the mind in proper order.

(4.) It is so, when other duties of religion are equally regarded with prayer. He whose religion lies all in prayer and hearing, hath none at all. God hath an equal respect to all other duties, and so must we have. Thus it is expressed, Acts x. 31, respecting the instance of alms; and James placeth all religion herein, because there is none without it, chap. i. 17. I shall not value his prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not alms according to

his ability; and this is required in an especial manner of ministers, that they be not like a hand set up in cross roads, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

So much respecting the spring of spiritual thoughts in prayer, which cannot be altogether unnecessary in a season when we ought to be very jealous, lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace, and when the greatest care is requisite that they be employed only to their proper end. I come to a

III. Outward means, or occasion of thoughts about spiritual things, which do not thereby evidence spiritual mindedness; this is *religious conversation*.

They that fear the Lord, will be speaking one to another of the things in which his glory is concerned. To declare the righteousness, the grace, and the glory of God, is the delight of his saints; and accordingly there are some who are ready on all occasions to speak of things spiritual and divine, and it is to be wished there were more. All the flagitious sins that abound in the world, are not a greater evidence of the decline of Christianity than this, that it is grown so un-

usual, yea a shame, for men to speak together of the things of God. It was not so when religion was in its primitive power and glory, nor is it so now with them who really fear God, and are sensible of their duty. There are some who embrace all occasions of spiritual conversation, and those with whom they converse, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but think of the spiritual things that are uttered. Often indeed, the track of men's thoughts is so contrary to such things, that they give them no entertainment; you do but cross their way with such discourse, on which they stand still a little and so pass on; even the countenance of some men will change on the occasion, and they betake themselves to an unsatisfied silence, till they can divert to other things. Some will make such replies of empty words, as fully evidence their hearts to be far enough estranged from the things proposed to them: on others, such occasional discourse will make impressions, and stir up present thoughts of spiritual things, but these give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded.

The thoughts of spiritual things, are with many as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house: they enter occasionally, and there is great ado to provide proper entertainment for them; presently they depart, and are not looked or inquired after any more; things of another nature are attended to, and new occasions bring in new guests for a season: but children are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and daily provision is always made for them. So is it with those occasional thoughts about spiritual things; by one means or other they enter into the mind, and are there entertained for a season; on a sudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are genuine and natural, arising from a living, internal spring, they dispose the mind to them, and are as the children of a house; they are expected at their places and seasons, and if they are missing they are inquired after; the soul calls itself to account, whence it is that it hath been so long without them, and summons them to its wonted converse and fellowship.

CHAP. III.

“Of the abounding of spiritual thoughts, shewing how far they are an evidence of spiritual mindedness.”

HAVING considered the first particular requisite to render our thoughts a certain indication of the state of our minds; that they be NATURAL, arising from ourselves, and not merely from outward occasions; I come to the

II. Essential characteristic; or evidence that our thoughts proceed from an internal spiritual fountain, which is, “*That they abound and abide in us,*” our minds being filled with them.

There is a measure of abounding which is necessary to evidence our being spiritually minded: it is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature, “that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually.” Gen. vi. 5. Some as to the matter of

them, some as to their end, all as to their principle ; for out of the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is evil. We can therefore have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state, than a change wrought in the course of the thoughts ; a change herein, is a strong evidence of a blessed change of state ; and the more the stream of our thoughts is turned, and our minds are filled with those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

There is nothing so unaccountable as the multiplicity of thoughts in the human mind : they fall from men like the leaves of trees, when shaken with the wind in autumn. To have all the thoughts, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil, and that continually, what a hell of confusion and horror must it needs be ! A deliverance from this loathsome, hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world ; without it neither life, nor peace, nor glory can be attained.

The mighty stream of the evil thoughts

of men, will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop to it: there are but two ways of relief, the one respecting the moral evil of these thoughts, the other their natural abundance. The first, by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho; get the mind seasoned with grace, for the tree must be made good, before the fruit will be so. The other is to turn their streams into new channels, fixing them on new objects, so shall we *abound in spiritual thoughts*; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no.

The spiritually minded abound in thoughts of spiritual things; unless we abound in' them, spiritual thoughts will not evidence we are of that class; therefore our grand inquiry should be, what measure ought to be assigned; or how to know when we so abound in spiritual thoughts, as that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded?

As a general answer, read over, among other Scriptures, the 119th Psalm; consider what David expresseth thereof himself, as to his constant delight in, and continual thoughts of, God and his law. Try

yourselves by that pattern; examine whether you can truly speak the same words with him, if not in the same degree of zeal, yet at least with the same sincerity of grace. We must be like him in this respect, if ever we intend to reach the heavenly place where he is. Our souls will be ruined, if when we read in the Scripture, how the saints express their experience in faith, love, delight in God, and constant meditations on him, while we grant that it was so with them, we should imagine there is no necessity that it should be so with us. These things are not written to shew what they were, but what we ought to be; all things concerning them, "were written for our admonition," 1 Cor. x. 11. And if we have not the same spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or that we shall go to that place whither they are ascended. Profession of the life of God and of Christianity, passeth with many now at a very low and easy rate; their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unsavoury

and corrupt, and their lives at best uneven, fickle, and disorderly as to the grand rule of obedience; yet all is well, all is life and peace. But the holy men of old, who obtained this testimony "that they pleased God," did not so walk before him; they thought of God in the night seasons, meditated continually in his law, spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their chief delight was in him, and in all things they followed hard after him. And if we answer not this description, it is to be feared we are not at present of them to whom pertain life and peace. But that we may the better judge of ourselves in this matter, I shall add a few rules to the general direction.

1. Consider, what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bears with those of other concerns. Our principal interest and concern, according to our profession, lies in things spiritual and eternal. Is it not then folly to suppose that our thoughts about these should not hold some proportion with those about other things? Rather should they not exceed them? It is not so with men in reference to their families, their trades, and

occasions of life. It is a truth not only consecrated by the testimony of him who is TRUTH, but evidence in the light of reason, "that where our treasure is, there will be our hearts also." Wherefore if our spiritual treasure be as we profess in spiritual things, (and woe be unto us if it be not,) on them will our affections and consequently our desires and thoughts be principally fixed. All classes of men would do well to examine, what proportion their thoughts of spiritual things do bear to those about their lawful callings, their relations, children and the like; setting aside the vain, impertinent, unprofitable thoughts, which night and day rove up and down, and intrude themselves in a numberless multitude on the mind. I fear, on such an examination, the proportion with the greatest part of professors, will be found to be very small, and with many next to none at all. If it should be asked, whether it be necessary that men should think as much and as often about heavenly things, as they do about the lawful affairs of their calling? I say, more, and oftener, if we are what we profess ourselves to be : by profession

we are bound for heaven and glory, but is it any evidence we really design it, if all, or the greatest part of our thoughts, are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must speedily leave behind us—and we have only occasional thoughts of the things above? Let a man, industriously engaged in the way of his calling, try himself by this rule every evening. Let him consider, what have been his thoughts about his earthly concerns, and what about spiritual, and then ask himself, whether he be spiritually minded, or not. Be not deceived; “as a man thinketh, so he is.” If the thoughts of heavenly things arising in us, bear no proportion with the other sort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant within; and if we account it a strange thing that our thoughts should be more exercised about spiritual things than about the duties of life, we must not think it strange, if, when we come to the trial, we cannot find either life or peace.

2. Consider, whether thoughts of spiritual things do constantly take possession of their proper seasons. The most busy

men in the world have some times of thinking, or of retiring unto their own thoughts : but they who are wise, will be at home as much as they can, and have as many seasons for such retirements as possible. If that man be foolish who busieth himself so much abroad in other concerns, as that he hath no time to consider the state of his own family ; much more is he who spends all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in inquiring, how it is with his immortal spirit. But, as just hinted, men can hardly avoid but that they may have some seasons, partly stated and partly occasional, wherein they entertain themselves with their own thoughts : the *evening* and the *morning*, times when there is a necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, as of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons.

If we are spiritually minded, if thoughts of spiritual things abound in us, they will with constancy possess these seasons, and look upon them as those which are their due ; for they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, both by examples and commands. Deut. vi. 7 ; Psalm xvi.

7, 8, and xcii. 2. If these seasons are given up to other ends and occupied with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence, that spiritual things have but little interest in our minds, little prevalence in the conduct of our souls. It is our duty to afford unto them **STATED TIMES** taken from other affairs; but if, instead thereof, we rob them of what is their own, to which no other business can lay any just claim, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and Oh, that they were all found in the practice of it! But if by the performance of that duty, they judge themselves discharged from any further exercise of spiritual thoughts, they can make no pretence to be spiritually minded. It must be observed, (and it will be found to be true,) that if the seasons which are, as it were due unto spiritual meditations and exercises, be taken from them, as they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives, so will they be one day a burthen upon the conscience, more than we can bear. Many will have cause to complain

unto eternity of those leisure times, those precious moments, which might have been improved for their advantage unto eternal blessedness. If we intend, therefore, to maintain a title to this grace of spiritual mindedness, if we would have any evidence of it in ourselves—without which we can have none of life or peace, and that we may pretend thereof is but an effect of security—we must preserve the claim and right of spiritual thoughts unto such seasons, and put them in possession of them.

3. Let us consider, how we are affected with our disappointments respecting these seasons. Have we by negligence, by temptations, or by occasional diversions, or the affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts of God, of Christ, and of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them; how are we affected with the review? A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with the omission of any duty, so it hath the pretence of a necessary occasion; and if it hath lost a temporal advantage, through attendance on spiritual duty, it will also deeply reflect on itself, and perhaps like that duty the

worse ever afterwards. But he that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of such omissions, and by every one of them is excited to more watchfulness for the future; the soul will say, Alas! how little have I been with Christ this day! How much time hath passed without a thought of him! How foolish was I, to omit such an opportunity! I am deeply in arrears, and can have no rest until they are discharged.

If we can omit and lose such seasons from time to time, without self-reflections and great regret, it is to be feared that we wax worse and worse; way will be made for more omissions, till we shall be wholly negligent and unconcerned about them. And, indeed, that woeful loss of time that is found among many professors, is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it on themselves, by a continual track of fruitless impertinent thoughts about their own concerns; some in vain converse with others, in which for the most part they edify one another but unto vanity. How much of this time might, nay ought to be, redeemed for spiritual exercises! The good Lord make all professors sensible of

their loss of former seasons, that they may be the more watchful and assiduous for the future in this great concern of their souls! Little do some think, what light, what joy, what readiness for the cross, or for heaven, they might have attained, had they improved all the proper seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed; who now are at a loss in all, and surprised with every fear or difficulty that befalls them.

Thus have I set before you the first thing that belongs to and characterizes spiritual mindedness; *thoughts about spiritual things, springing naturally from a living principle*, a spiritual disposition of heart, *abounding and abiding in the mind*; these are inseparable from the most undeceiving indication, and the strongest evidence of being spiritually minded.

CHAP. IV.

Shewing the general objects of those thoughts which are evidences of a spiritual mind.

BEFORE I proceed to the next general head, the foundation of the grace and duty inquired after, some things should be offered and considered, to render what hath been already suggested more particularly useful; and there is nothing more necessary and important, than to see what are, or what ought to be, the OBJECTS of those thoughts, which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spiritually minded.

This may be useful to many, by helping them to fix their minds, which are too apt to rove into all uncertainty. Many are barren in this duty, because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts, when they have chosen a subject for meditation; they tire them-

selves and faint, not because they are unwilling to go, but because they cannot find their way. I shall therefore just mention the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and afterwards endeavour to help you to a steady contemplation of them.

1. Observe the *especial calls of Providence*, and apply your mind unto thoughts of the several duties required in and by them. There is a voice in all dispensations of Providence; a call, a cry in every rod of God, in every chastising providence; he therein makes a declaration of his name, holiness, and power, and this every wise man will endeavour to discern, and so comply with the call. "The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, the men of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." Micah vi. 9. Hearken not to any who would give any other interpretation of present providential dispensations in the world; but that they are plain declarations of his displeasure against the sins of men. Is not his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially

against such as detain the truth in unrighteousness, or the hypocritical professors of the Gospel? Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of all earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? The fingers that appeared writing the doom of Belshazzar, did it in characters and words that none could read and understand but Daniel; but the present call of God is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds, and thunder over us, and those that are journeying will not believe there is a storm a coming, they must bear the severity thereof.

When calamities, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, take place, this is the time wherein we may have an especial trial whether we be spiritually minded or not. If grace be resident within us, it will exert itself in a diligent search into, and a holy watch over ourselves respecting those things, against which the displeasure of God is declared. It is certainly our duty to search diligently that nothing be found in us, against which God's anger is manifested; no ground of hope respecting our

spiritual condition, no sense of our sincerity in any duties, no visible difference between us and others in the world, should divert us from diligence in self-examination.

As we should in such a season take heed of negligence and security, so in compliance with the voice of Providence, there should be an humble resignation of ourselves and all our concerns unto the will of God, sitting loose in our affections from all earthly enjoyments. This we neither do, nor can do, profess what we will; unless our thoughts are much exercised about the reasons of and motives unto it. Alas! how many at present do openly walk contrary to God herein! The ways, countenances, and discourses of men give evidences hereunto; their love to present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance, to advance and abound under the calls of God to the contrary. How can persons pretend to be SPIRITUALLY MINDED, the current of whose thoughts runs in direct contrariety to the will and dispensations of God? Here lies the ground of their self-deceit; they are professors of the gos-

pel, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it: but one negative evidence will render a hundred, that are positive, useless; "all things have I done," said the young man; "yet one thing thou wantest," replied our Saviour; and the want of that one rendered his *all things* of no avail to him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, and neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition; but are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail: and what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if your thoughts are directly contrary to the present calls of God? If at such a time, when his judgments are in the world, or his voice is in the city and kingdom; if when there are manifest tokens of his displeasure, we slight them, neglect his voice, put it wholly from ourselves, and continue our love to the world and our desires after it as before; if the daily contrivance of our minds be not how to attain a constant resignation of ourselves and our all unto the will of God,

which cannot be done without much thoughtfulness on the reasons of and motives to it; I cannot understand how we can judge ourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any therefore say, that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon; I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them to the due performance of present duties, self-examination, and holy resignation of persons, lives, families, all our enjoyments, unto the sovereign will and infinite wisdom of God.

2. *The special trials and temptations of men*, call for the exercise of our thoughts in a peculiar manner. If a man hath bodily pains or distempers, they will cause him to think much of them; at least, if he be wise he will do so, nor will he be always complaining of their smart, but inquire into their causes, and seek their removal; and shall men be more negligent about the spiritual distempers of the soul; shall they have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about

them? Is it not to be feared, that where it is so, the temptations are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensibly unto death eternal? Not to have our minds exercised about these things, is to be stupidly secure.

It must be confessed, there is some difficulty, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; because one great means of their prevalence is, by stirring up multiplied thoughts about their objects. The previous power of lust in the affections will fill the mind with thoughts, and the heart will coin imaginations in compliance therewith; they are the way whereby lust draws away the heart from duty, and entices unto sin; the means at least whereby some men come to have eyes full of adultery, or live in constant contemplation of the pleasures of sin. And thoughts will also arise, by renewed representations of the objects of sin, whether it be REAL, as Achan saw the wedge of gold and coveted it; or IMAGINARY, when the imagination, being tainted with lust, continually repre-

sents the pleasure of sin, and the actings of it unto the mind. When temptations do multiply thoughts about sin, proceeding from either of these causes, or from the suggestions of the evil one; and the mind hath been used to give them entertainment, that person wants nothing but opportunities and occasions of taking off the power of outward restraints, for the commission of actual sin. It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts above their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I now would speak only unto them whose temptations are an affliction and burden; and such persons must also be ever careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare, and be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of an object with detestation, and end them in complacency and approbation; the deceitfulness of sin lays hold on something or other that lust in the mind approves, and so corrupts the whole frame of spirit which began the duty. There have been instances of persons who have set out with a resolution to punish

sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion unto the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Sin hath a thousand deceitful and destructive arts, and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections, from every thing it hath once made a bait of; especially if it hath already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations thereof. Wherefore whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I would not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it; for sometimes the remembrance of former satisfaction of their lust, sometimes present surprisals, with the suitableness of it unto unmortified corruption, and sometimes the craft of Satan, fixing the imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them to a fresh compliance with that sin, from which they would be delivered.

Think not of the **MATTER OF SIN**, the things that are in the world, suited unto the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, lest ye be more and more entangled; but rather think much of the ways of relief, exercise your thoughts chiefly about the ways of deliverance from the snares. Think of the **GUILT OF SIN**,

that you may be humbled—think of the **POWER OF SIN**, that you may seek strength against it. Acquaint yourselves with the great and indeed only way of relief in the season of temptation, as it is pointed out, Heb. ii. 17, 18. and chap. iv. 15, 16. The only way for deliverance, is, by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, and his power to succour them that are tempted. I speak not against promises, resolutions, and endeavours, with such other ways of escape as are in our own power; they are well in their proper place; but none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations, to their own spiritual advantage and the glory of God, but by the exercise of faith on Christ Jesus, and on the sufficiency of his grace for our deliverance. But men not spiritually minded, cannot fix their thoughts on these things, and therefore some will groan under the conflict between their temptations and convictions; some daily pine away, their temptations get ground upon them, until their breach grow great like the sea, and there be no stopping to it; and others betake themselves unto the pretended relief, that any false religion tenders unto them.

We are all of us liable unto temptations, either such as are EXTRAORDINARY, as when the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke: it is true God tempts none, as temptation formally leads unto sin, but he orders temptations so far as they are chastisements; of these there is no doubt; but any man not judicially hardened, may know both his disease and the remedy. But the ORDINARY temptations with which we are exercised, need diligent attendance for their discovery, as well as for deliverance from them; and it is to be feared, that many abide in darkness all their days, through the power of temptations, yet never know what they are, or wherein they consist; yea, some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. But in the exercise of due watchfulness, prudence, and diligence, men may know the plague of their own heart, the ways by which temptations excite, and the advantages they take of them.

For instance, *a minister* may have eminent gifts, and be useful and successful in his labours; such an one shall hardly

avoid a double temptation, spiritual pride, and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit a NOVICE (one unexperienced in the deceits of sin and ways of grace) into the office of the ministry, lest "he should be lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. iii. 6. He himself was not without danger hereof. 2 Cor. xii. 17. The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the secret workings of pride, upon applause and success, unless they constantly balance them with thoughts of their real meanness and unworthiness in the sight of God; and it is well if their acceptance and success above others in the ministry, do not produce remissness in the several duties of the divine life, particularly in that of mortification. All who are MINISTERS, should be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves, as to expose our souls to these snares; and the effects of negligence herein, may openly appear unto the great disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant with the world and its affairs. Now, negligence

in spiritual watchfulness, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, and conformity to the world, will upon all occasions impose themselves upon such persons; and if they understand not their temptations, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them. They that are rich have their temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their constitution, of others in their society, of most in the various circumstances of life.

But in these cases, men favoured with the gospel are not ignorant of the ways of preservation and means of deliverance; which are, (1.) Know what are the special temptations by which you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you; if this be neglected or disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace. (2.) Know your remedy: many duties are requisite unto this end; but know assuredly, that no one of them, nor all in conjunction, will bring relief, without application by faith unto him who is able to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore, (3.) in this consists your great duty

respecting temptations ; constantly exercise your thoughts on the love, compassion, and care of Christ, with his ability to help and save all them that believe in him.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect to any urgent *general temptation* : there are seasons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein ; and what if a man should judge that now is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein ? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness, and decay in grace, especially as to the actings of zeal, love, and delight in God, with an indifference unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation ? If any one do so judge, doubtless it is his duty to have his thoughts exercised, how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man.

3. *All things in religion*, both respecting faith and practice, are to be the objects of our thoughts. As they are proposed, or do occur to us, so we ought to give them entertainment in our medita-

tions : to let them slip, or flow from us, as water that is poured into a leaky vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore here select one capital instance, but which includes many, of those things on which the thoughts of the truly spiritually minded will continually be employed, and in which they will abound.

HEAVEN and the things that are above, *eternal things*, will occupy the thoughts of the spiritually minded. Herein consists the life of this grace and duty ; to mind the things of heaven, and to be spiritually minded, is all one ; or it is the cause of it, as to its growth and degrees, and the evidence thereof in experience. To me, it is impossible for to suppose a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them : without doubt the generality of Christians are greatly defective in this duty, partly for want of light into, and partly for want of delight in them. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein is their inheritance ; if they are absent from it for a season, yet do they labour to acquaint themselves with its principal concerns. But this hea-

venly country, wherein is our eternal inheritance, is not regarded; men do not exercise themselves as they should in thoughts of things eternal and invisible. Indeed most, if not all, men live and act under the power of a conviction that there is a state of immortality and glory to come; and with a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their temptations, sufferings, and sorrows, though with many it is only a *reserve* when they can be here no more. But as to a daily contemplation of the nature and blessedness of the upper world, or as to any entrance into it by faith and hope, the greater part are strangers.

However, if we are *spiritually minded*, nothing will be more natural unto us, than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those which to us are of the greatest concern, as well as excellent and glorious in themselves. The direction is, then, that we make heavenly things, the things of the future state, a principal object of our thoughts, and that we meditate much upon them. Without this, all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use to us. It is,

doubtless, the Christian's duty to inform and possess his mind with right notions and just apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory; and it is by faith only we have a prospect of them: but faith can give us no interest in, unless we have due apprehensions of them. And it is to be feared the greatest part of mankind do deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this matter; they fancy a future state, which hath no foundation but in their own imagination; wherefore the apostle, directing us to seek and mind the things that are above, adds, for the guidance of our thoughts, the consideration of the principal concernment of them, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Col. iii. 1, 2. He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of Christ in his exaltation.

All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness agree in this, that it contains, or is accompanied with, a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil; from pain, sickness, sorrow, losses, poverty, and all outward troubles; from death itself, and all that leads to it. It is

a right and blessed notion of heaven, that God shall there wipe away all tears from our eyes, or remove from us all causes of sorrow : and it would be to our advantage, if we accustomed our minds more to this kind of relief than we do ; if upon the incursion of fears, dangers, and sorrows, we did more readily retreat to thoughts of that state where we shall be freed from all. But there is that which to the spiritually minded hath more evil in it than all other things put together, and that is SIN : other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by the natural affections at some seasons, than ever our sins did in any instance at any one time ; as a man may have greater trouble in sense of pain, by a fit of the tooth-ache, gone in an hour, than in a hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life. But take in the whole course of life, and all the actings of our souls in spiritual judgment, as well as natural affection ; I do not understand how a man can be a true believer, unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Now heaven is a state

of deliverance from sin, a state where we shall be eternally freed from sin, in all its causes, concomitants, and effects, and triumph over it for ever.

This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended, and which we may dwell upon to our great satisfaction and advantage; and frequent thoughts and meditation of heaven in this point of view, argue a person to be spiritually minded; for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden, when no thoughts are more welcome unto him, than those of that state in which sin shall be no more. Let such who cannot arise unto fixed thoughts of invisible things in any other branch, dwell on this consideration of them; this the meanest and weakest person, who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace, is capable of apprehending, and able to practise.

As to the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts of men are very various. Many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a future state; imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not; and when their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties

for a while, they are at last swallowed up in nothing; and whereas what is truly heaven pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found, they seldom or never in good earnest exercise their thoughts about it. So great a part of mankind as the *Mahometans*, do conceive the state of future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures;—a full evidence that the religion they profess is false. It doth not enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections to the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited to its rational constitution: if it did, they would place their happiness in them: wherefore it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men unto their eternal destruction.

Some of the *philosophers* of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of the other world consisted in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the Divine nature; which truth hath been greatly improved by the light of

Scripture; and contemplative men have seriously and elegantly illustrated it in their excellent discourses on what is called the BEATIFIC VISION, whereby they intend all the ways whereby God in the highest and immediate instances can communicate of himself unto the human soul, and the utmost elevation of its intellectual capacities to receive those communications, giving it the utmost delight and felicity. But still this definition is above the capacities of ordinary Christians, and they cannot properly exercise their thoughts upon it; and the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory not contrary to, nor inconsistent with, the former, but more suited to the faith and experience of believers, and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto the mind, and therefore should be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest Christian is capable of improving in his daily practice, is, that *faith shall be turned into sight,*

and grace into glory. Wherefore this is the difference between our present and our future state; sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith; and if so, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith. What, then, is the principal present object of faith, as it is evangelical, in whose room sight succeeds? Is it not "the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, and power of God in Christ; the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will, and the ways of their accomplishment unto the eternal salvation of the church in and by him, with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself?" Therefore, in the full satisfactory representation of these things unto the soul, received by sight, or a direct immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. We behold them now darkly, as in a glass, (that is the utmost to which by faith we can attain,) but in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed. The infinite incomprehensible excellencies of the Divine nature, are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith here, nor shall they be so unto our

sight in heaven : as the manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of faith, so will it be of sight ; only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiesce in, as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them, with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other.

Some, perhaps, will be ready to say, "That if this be heaven, they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty, as for which it should be desired." It may be so ; for some have no instrument with which to take a view of invisible things, but carnal imaginations; some have no light, no principle, no disposition of soul, to which these things are either acceptable or suitable ; and some will go no farther in the consideration of them than their reason will guide ; but we look for no other heaven, we desire none but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the Gospel—that which shall perfect all the beginnings of divine grace in us We value not that heaven which is equally suited to the desires and inclinations of the worst of men, as well as of the

best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. The glory of heaven, for which the Gospel prepares us, to which faith leads and conducts us, and after which the souls of believers long, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them, and the communication of their effects unto us. The effects produced by them in our souls now, are the first fruits of glory; he unto whom this is not desirable, may betake himself unto Mahomet's paradise or the philosopher's speculations; in the Gospel heaven he hath no interest.

There are sundry other things that belong unto this state of glory; but what hath been mentioned is the fountain and spring of all: God's communications of himself unto us, and our enjoyment of him, shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ. But all the *objective glory* in heaven would not make us blessed and happy, if it were possible to behold and enjoy it, if our natures were not also made perfect, freed from all disorder, irre-

gular motions, and imperfect operations: and what is it that must give our nature this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone, of the beginnings of which we are here made partakers. Herein consists the renovation of the image of God in us; and the perfect communication of that image unto us, is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost to which our capacity is suited; and by the stedfast adherence of our whole souls unto God, in perfect love and delight, we eternally abide in that happy state.

This is that notion of heaven with which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant; and the true stating it by faith is a discriminating character of believers. The persons who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their *initial state* in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other things, cannot conceive how heavenly blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away rough, unwrought diamonds as useless stones, not knowing to what a polishing will bring them; so men, unskilful in the mysteries of godliness, do

not conceive there can be any glory in rough unwrought grace, in the beginnings and exertions of it here, ignorant of that lustre and beauty which the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it.

But it is not sufficient merely to have right apprehensions of heavenly things; it is the Christian's duty to think often on them, and frequently to contemplate his own concernment in them; without this, all our speculations concerning the nature of heaven and eternal things, will be of no use unto us. This is the great evidence of our having a real interest in things above; the great trial whether we are spiritually minded or not. Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison of which all other things are but loss and dung? Assuredly then our minds will be very conversant with them. It cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle suited unto things above, and of the same kind and nature with them; and that his soul should be under the influence and conduct of those graces which strive and naturally tend to perfection, and yet not have his *thoughts*.

greatly exercised about heaven and the things at Christ's right hand. Not to abound in contemplation of them, argues, whatever men may profess, they are earthly and carnal.

I must add, the spiritually minded, in their thoughts and meditations of the glory of heaven and eternal things, do lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life, and thus they are ever ready to meet them with courage and resolution, and are resigned, if not cheerful, under them. When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness that which will sustain and comfort it under the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, and life itself, and which more than counterbalances also the longest duration of sufferings, which, at their utmost extent, in comparison, are but for a moment. And as heaven is contrasted with the sufferings of this life in the thoughts of the spiritually minded, so they often compare it with the opposite state of eternal misery. Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein; *those do so the least who*

are in most danger of becoming a prey to them. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to persuade themselves that there is no such place, because it is their interest and desire that there should be none; others are so profane as to make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment was but a fable; and most seem to think that there is a severity in thoughts about it which may well be spared: transient thoughts they will have of it, but will not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed and terrified; and they would fain flatter themselves it is not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any of the human race in that condition, not reflecting that there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments, and their eternity by HIMSELF, than in all the Scripture besides. These thoughts generally proceed from men's unwillingness to be troubled in their sins; but is it not the height of folly to endeavour the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them

unto eternity, the due consideration of which is a great means for an escape from it? The spiritually minded will have their thoughts conversant about the future state of eternal misery; they will consider it as what they were by nature obnoxious unto, as what they deserved by their personal sins, as what they were delivered from by Jesus, the Saviour, and as a strong impression of the indignation of God against sin; which thoughts will naturally produce fresh resentment against that evil thing which God hates, and will cherish humility, self-abasement, and admiration of divine grace. This, therefore, is our *necessary duty*; it is required of us, that, in our thoughts and meditations, we compare the state of blessedness as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus, with that state of eternal misery we had deserved; and if there be any spark of grace or of gratitude in our hearts, it will be stirred up to due exercise.

CHAP. V.

Directing to the particular objects of spiritual thoughts in heaven.

HAVING attained right notions of the glory of the heavenly state, it will be greatly to our advantage to fix on some particulars belonging to it as the *special objects* of our thoughts. As,

1. Think much of him who unto Christians is the life and centre of all the glory of heaven, CHRIST himself. The whole glory of the blessed state is expressed by "being ever with the Lord, where he is, to behold his glory." In and through him is the beatific manifestation of God and his glory made, and through him are all communications of inward glory unto us. The present resplendency of heavenly glory consists in his mediatory ministry, and he will be the medium of all-glorious communications between God and the church unto eternity : wherefore

the spiritually minded cannot but fix their thoughts on Christ above as the centre of heavenly glory.

By *faith* they have continual recourse to him, on account of what he did and suffered for them in this world, and this proceeds from a sense of their own wants; for on what he was and did on earth, do depend pardon of sins, justification, and peace with God. But *love* of him is no less necessary to us than faith in him; and although we have powerful motives unto love, from his gracious acts on our behalf when manifest in flesh, yet the formal reason of our adherence unto him, is what he is in himself as now exalted in heaven. If the thoughts of his present glory be not frequently with, and also refreshing unto us, how dwelleth his love in us?

Again, is it not our *hope* that ere long we shall be ever with him? If so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be with him here as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose that they place their chief happiness in being for ever with Christ, who care not to be with him here; and the only way of our being pre-

sent with him on earth, is by faith and love exerting themselves in spiritual thoughts and affections. How absurd for men to esteem themselves Christians who scarce think of Christ all the day long; and yet how many who scarce ever think of him but when they swear by his name! But, on the other hand, I have read of some who have lived and died in continual contemplation of him, so far as the imperfection of the present state would admit; and I have known, and do know, some who call themselves to account, reprove and censure themselves, if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts; and it is strange it should be otherwise with all them who love him in sincerity, though I know too many who give full evidence that it is a rare thing for them to be exercised in serious thoughts and meditations about him. They will speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, and of his power and goodness, but mention Christ unto them, with any thing of faith, and love, and trust in him, these are as *strange things*; the things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ, are foolishness unto them.

But no man can be a Christian unless his thoughts are much on and with Christ : this duty or exercise lies at the foundation of all communion between Christ and the souls which believe in him. To be a Christian supposes a continued thoughtfulness of Christ ; but we should be careful that our thoughts of him are conceived and directed according to the rules prescribed in the sacred oracles, lest we deceive our own souls, give up the conduct of our affections to vain imaginations, and render all our devotion an abomination. For want of adhering to this rule, *the power of religion was at first ruined*, and superstition introduced and established. Men were convinced that they must think much of Christ, and supposed that this would make them conformable to him ; but their minds being carnal, destitute of evangelical faith, and of the wisdom of faith to exercise their thoughts and affections in a due manner, according to Scripture, they gave themselves up to many foolish imaginations and inventions, by which they thought to express their love and conformity to him. They would have *images* of him, which

they embraced, adored, and bedewed with their tears; they would have *crucifixes*, as they called them, which they carried about with them and wore next their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms; they would go on pilgrimage to the place where he died, through a thousand dangers, and purchase a feigned chip of the tree on which he suffered, at the price of all they had in the world; they would endeavour, by long thoughtfulness, fasting, and watchings, to cast their souls into ecstasies and raptures, in which they fancied him coporally present with them; and they came at last to make themselves like him, in getting impressions of wounds on their sides, hands, and feet. Unto all these things, and sundry others of like nature and tendency, did superstition abuse and corrupt the minds of men, and doth still, under a pretence of a principle of truth.

But we are not to slight and neglect our duty because other men have been and are mistaken in theirs, nor are we to part with the practical, fundamental principles of religion because they have been abused by superstition. We see, indeed,

how dangerous it is to depart from the conduct of scripture light and rule; but there is no gospel truth more certain than this, that believers ought constantly to meditate on Christ by the actings of faith in their thoughts and affections. God hath both shewed us the necessity of this duty, and hath prescribed the ways and means whereby we may perform it. Would you think of Christ as you ought, pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with you continually, to excite and quicken your thoughts of Christ;—it belongs to his office: and, that your thoughts may be fixed, treasure up in your memories and hearts those passages of Scripture which have respect to his person, offices, and grace.

The advantages of this thoughtfulness and contemplation are obvious. No thoughts of Christ, proceeding from faith and accompanied with love, shall be lost: they that sow this seed shall return with their sheaves. Christ will meet them with gracious intimations of his acceptance of and delight in them, and will return a sense of his own love unto them. He never was, he never will be, behind or deficient

in returns of love. Our thoughts of Christ, as they are exceedingly acceptable unto him, so they are the best pledges of our cordial affection; and, let it be remembered, they are the only means whereby we comply with the gracious intimations of his love, and the chief way in which our souls are prepared and become meet for the reception and entertainment of him. Our want of communion with Christ, or the experience of it, ariseth principally from our defect in this exercise; to slight it is not the way to have our joys abound. God hath taught many that the sweetness, life, and power of religion, and the manifestations of his love and the grace of Christ, are to be experienced and rejoiced in, only or chiefly, by constant thoughtfulness and meditations on Christ.

The glory of his presence as God and man united for ever, the discharge of his mediatorial office at the right hand of God, the glory of his present acts for the church, the love, power, and efficacy of his intercession, by which he secures the salvation of his people, and the approach and consequences of his glorious coming

unto judgment, are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations; with constancy and delight will our minds be exercised about the things which are above, especially Christ himself, if we are his disciples indeed.

II. The second especial object of the spiritually minded, and on which their thoughts will constantly be exercised, is God. He is the fountain whence all spiritual things proceed, and the ocean in which they issue. He is their centre and circumference, wherein they all begin, meet, and end. Thus the apostle, Rom. xi. 36: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever." All things arise from his power, and are all disposed by his wisdom, with a tendency to his glory; under this consideration alone, as they come from and tend unto him, are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditations. *God is all in all*; he, therefore, is, or ought to be, the supreme, absolute object of our thoughts and desires; and where our thoughts do not either immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence, tend to an end in him, they are not spiritual.

But oh! how many of mankind are there, even in Christian states, to whom it may be said, *God is not in all their thoughts!* Indeed, of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees; for all the wicked are not equally forgetful of him. 1. Some are under the power of atheistical thoughts; they deny or question the very being of a God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rise unto; to acknowledge God, and yet refuse to be subject to his holy will, may be thought as bad, yea, worse, than to deny his being; but it is not. **THAT** is a rebellion against his authority; but **THIS**, an hatred unto the only fountain of all goodness, truth, and being; if they own his being, they must acknowledge him infinitely righteous, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. The great reason why men both question the being of God and despise his providence, is their resistance to the light and power of Christianity. It is the fullest revelation God ever made; it is the last he ever will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against its light, break its

cords, and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the highest Atheism that human nature is capable of? it is in vain to expect relief or preservation from inferior means, where the highest and noblest is rejected. Reason, or the light of nature, gives evidences to the being of a God, and arguments are well pleaded from them to the confusion of Atheists; arguments sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and godhead, who had no other, no higher evidences of them; but as God hath designed to magnify his word, above all his name, or above all other ways of the revelation of himself unto the world, he will not give the honour unto the light of nature; reason shall not have the same efficacy on the minds of those who reject the light and power of divine revelation, as it hath, or may have, on them whose best guide it is; and, therefore, oftentimes there is more common honesty amongst civilized Heathens and Turks than amongst degenerate Christians. And from the same reason, the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. Persons who fall off from all subjection of

mind to the Gospel, either notionally or practically, are a thousand times more disposed unto downright Atheism than such who never enjoyed the light of the Gospel. Contempt of the Gospel begets in, and leaves on the mind such a depraved corrupt habit, that it cannot but be strongly inclined to all evil. The best things, when corrupted, yield the worst savour. Whatever ground the Gospel loseth in the soul, sin possesseth for itself; and as the love and practice of sin makes it the interest of some that there should be no God to call them to an account, so they fly to *Atheism*, which alone pretends to give them security. But none can have the least inclination or temptation to be Atheists, until they have rejected the Gospel, which immediately exposes them to the worst of evils.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said, *that God is not in all their thoughts*, though they acknowledge his being. They are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. "They profess that they know God, but in their works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to

every good work reprobate." How many in our day who think, who act in all things, as if there was no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence! We need not seek far for evidences of men's disregard to God, the pride of their countenances testify against them. Oaths, licentiousness of life, and contempt of all that is good, evidence and confirm it. Such as these, however, may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, and may attend outwardly on his worship; but they think not of God at all in a proper manner; he is not in all their thoughts.

3. There are yet less degrees of this forgetfulness of God. Some are so filled with thoughts of the world, and the concerns of life, that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought. As the love of God and the love of the world, in prevalent degrees, are inconsistent, so thoughts of God and of the world, in the like degree, are inconsistent; yet this is the state of many who would, notwithstanding, be esteemed spiritually minded. Love and desire of earthly things, exhaust the vigour of their spirits all the day long,

and in the midst of a multitude of worldly thoughts, with heads and hearts full of them, many engage in holy duties, and these times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding these duties, through the want of a due preparation for them, through the fulness of their minds with other things, and through the absence of grace in them, it may be said, *comparatively*, that God is not in all their thoughts.

I pray God that this (at least as to some degrees thereof) be not the condition of many among us. Setting aside those who openly live in sin, who are profane in their principles and profligate in their lives, what shall we think of some who are sober in life, industrious in their callings, and not negligent in the external duties of religion? Such as these are apt to approve themselves, and others are engaged to speak well of them; but if they are traced home it will be found, respecting many, that God is not in all their thoughts as he ought to be. Their earthly conversation, designs, and pursuits, do all manifest that the vigour of their spirits, their whole hearts, are en-

gaged in things below ; a few transient thoughts are sometimes cast away upon God, which he must despise.

4. Persons cherishing secret lusts in their hearts and lives, cannot be said to have God properly in their thoughts. Such persons no doubt there are. God is much in their words, but not duly in their thoughts ; they flatter themselves for a season, but presently some hateful or hurtful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them. One is drunken, another unclean, a third an extortioner, giving scandal hereby to the world, and bringing themselves under a most dreadful woe ; but we must bear the reproach, as the apostles of Christ and others did of old, committing the issue of all things unto the care of heaven ; however, it is good in such a season to be jealous over ourselves and others, and to exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The persons here described cannot be *spiritually minded* ; but I would just premise, that God for his own glory may suffer a lust or corruption to break loose in some that are ; but

then we must distinguish between a time of temptation in some and the ordinary state of the mind in others. A lust or corruption starting up, or breaking forth in conjunction with a violent temptation, is the continual burden and grief of the soul that is spiritually minded, and it will be ever conflicting with and contending against it; but with them in whom any sin is ordinarily prevalent it is otherwise; their trouble, if they have any on this account, respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects, otherwise they like the lust well enough, and are not willing to part with it. These are far enough from being spiritually minded, and none can be so, unless they have many thoughts of God, as concerning what he is in himself, and what he will be unto them, and do also take delight in such thoughts and meditations.

God will be much in the thoughts of the spiritually minded:—

1. As to his *being* and *existence*. In this is the foundation of all our relation and access to him. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is;” this is the first object of faith, and it is the first act

of reason, and being the sole foundation of all religion, it is our duty to exercise multiplied thoughts about it, and to renew them on all occasions. As our knowledge of the Divine Being (as to its foundation) is laid in the light of nature, the operation of conscience, and the due exercise of reason about the works and effects of infinite power and wisdom, so it ought to be increased and rendered useful by *faith* in divine revelation, and the *experience* of a sacred energy through it. By this faith we ought to let in frequent thoughts of the being and existence of God; and this duty is peculiarly necessary in our day, from the abounding of Atheism, both notional and practical, and from the unaccountable confusions and divisions that there are in the world. Never had profane and profligate men greater outward appearance to strengthen them in their Infidelity and Atheism, nor those that are godly greater trials for their faith, with respect to the visible state of things. Without a frequent retreat to the contemplation of *God's being*, there is no relief nor refreshment to be had under the evil principles and atheistical impieties

which abound among us; and in such a season as this, the spiritually minded will much exercise their thoughts on the existence of God; they will continually say within themselves, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth." Hence will follow such apprehensions of the immensity of his nature and of his infinite wisdom, eternal power, and absolute sovereignty, as will hold their souls firm and stedfast in the highest storms of temptation that may befall them.

If thoughts should arise that there is no God, which nature itself startles at, the spiritually minded will retreat, as is the best way, to his own experience: he hath a witness in himself, a spiritual sense and experience of eternal power and Godhead, as also of all those other perfections of God which he is pleased to manifest by Jesus Christ. He therefore will treat the suggestion, "that there is no God," like him of old, who, when a cunning sophister would prove to him by syllogisms that there was no such thing as motion, gave no answer unto his arguments, but *rose up and walked*. How

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often have I had experience of the power and presence of God in prayer! will the real Christian say. How often hath he exerted his power and grace respecting me by his spirit and his word, with an irresistible evidence of his being, goodness, and love! How often hath conscience been refreshed with a sense of the pardon of sins, and in speaking that peace to my soul which all the world could not communicate unto me! In how many afflictions, troubles, and dangers hath he been a present help and relief! What sensible emanations of life and power from him have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory! And whatever be in this suggestion, one thing I know full well, that whereas I was dead, I am alive; whereas I was blind, now I see; and that by an effect of divine power. The shield of faith, managed by the hand of experience, will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and a recalling the experiences we have had of God, will lead us to the exercise of all kind of graces.

Should we find ourselves lost, or, as it were, overwhelmed in our thoughts of the

Divine Being, which is no wonder from the greatness and glory of the object, we shall do well to betake ourselves to a holy admiration of what we cannot comprehend. Inquiries and reasonings will puzzle and disquiet us. Infinite glory forbids us any near approach, and that only by faith; the soul, therefore, should bow itself down to God's adorable greatness and incomprehensible perfections, and divert its thoughts to the *effects* of his being and attributes. Our thoughts concerning the being of God, before whom all the nations and inhabitants of the world are as the dust of the balance, and as vanity, can issue in nothing but holy admiration; but then what is too great and high for us in itself, is made suitable to our understanding in its effects: "The invisible things of God are known in and by the things that are seen." These we may consider, and in the streams taste of the fountain which at present we cannot approach.

2. With thoughts of the being of God, those of his *omnipresence* and *omniscience* continually occupy the breasts of the spiritually minded. We cannot take one step

in a walk before him unless we remember that always, and in all places, he is present with us, and that the frame of the heart, and our inward thoughts, are ever in his view, no less than our outward actions. But, alas ! in how few is there this sure evidence of being spiritually minded ! Pretence of business, engagements in trade, carnal relations, and the common course of communication in the world, with a supposition that all sorts of society are allowed for diversion, have sullied the beauty of Gospel conversation, and cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even at seasons when men cannot be preserved from sin without it.

To some, *company* constitutes such a season ; therefore, let those who with a careless boldness do put themselves among such persons as they know have been temptations and occasions of sin unto them ; yea, let all who enter promiscuously into all societies and companies, know assuredly, that if they awe not their hearts continually with the apprehensions of God as always with them, and his eye always upon them, they will not be pre-

served from snares and sinful miscarriages. Thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, should be ever present with those who choose, or are cast on, societies of irreligious persons; indeed, as for the former, no wonder if they forget all regard to God, and it is just with God to leave them to all the evils that naturally and generally do ensue: and such thoughts are needful also to the best of us, and in the best of human societies, that we behave not amiss at any time.

To others, *privacy with opportunity* is an occasion of temptation and sin, and by this, many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined. Cursed fruits proceed every day from this occasion, as well as from light and sinful company. A concurrence of secrecy and opportunity, as it hath produced many shameful things, so it is a most proper season for thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and none will be wanting, in some measure, in them if spiritually minded. One thought of the actual presence of the holy God, and the open view of the all-seeing eye, is sufficient to lay in the ba-

lance 'against any temptation springing out of secrecy and opportunity. A speedy retreat hereto, upon the first sinful thought with which temptation may assault the soul, will be its strong tower, and where it shall be safe.

Another season for exercising the mind in thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, is in our *solitudes* and *retirements*. These afford the most genuine evidences, whether we are spiritually minded or not. What we are in them, *that* we are, and no more. Whatever is stored up in the affections and memory, will at such a time offer itself for our present entertainment; and where men have accustomed themselves to any things whatsoever, they will press on them for the possession of their thoughts. The Psalmist shews us the way to prevent this evil; Psalm xvi. 7, 8: "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand." Continual apprehensions of the presence of God with him, kept his mind and affections in that awe and reverence of him,

as that they gave him counsel in all such seasons, and instructed him in his duty.

Another season calling for the same duty, are *times of great difficulties and danger*. Suppose a man is left alone in his trials for the profession of the Gospel; suppose him brought before judges and rulers who are filled with rage and armed with power against him, and all things are disposed to affect him with dread and terror. It is the duty of such a person to call off his thoughts from all things visibly present, and to fix them on the omnipresence and omniscience of God. He sits among those judges, though they acknowledge him not, and rules over them at his pleasure. Thoughts of the presence and power of God, gave the Old-Testament saints not only comfort and support under their distress, when they were alone and helpless, but courage and resolution to defy their enemies; witness those holy souls that withstood Nebuchadnezzar, and braved his burning furnace. And when the Apostle Paul was brought before Nero, that monster of cruelty, and all men forsook him, he affirms, "that the Lord stood by him, and

strengthened him." He refreshed himself with thoughts of his presence, and had the blessed fruit thereof. Herein also did the Holy Martyrs triumph, and even despised their bloody persecutors; and our Saviour himself made it the ground of his support on the like occasion, John xvi. 32: "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Did Christians but possess their souls with this apprehension in their trials and dangers, that indeed they are not alone, because their Father, God, is with them; did they on these occasions (when all things are full of perplexity and terror) what is their wisdom and duty to do—even abstract and take off their thoughts from all outward and present appearances, and fix them on the presence of God; the scene of things would be greatly changed in their minds, despondency would flee away, and they would find all that appears against them to be nothing but weakness, folly and vanity, while on their side, are wisdom and almighty power.

Seasons of *providential warnings* call also for thoughts of God's omnipresence and omniscience. We have frequently such warnings ; sometimes in the things which are esteemed accidental, from which ourselves may have been strangely delivered ; sometimes in the things which we see do befall others by thunder and lightning, or by violent storms. All the works of God, especially those that are rare and uncommon, have a voice which speaks unto us ; and the first thing suggested to a spiritual mind in such seasons, will be, God is in this place.

3. The spiritually minded have frequent thoughts also of God's *omnipotence*, or almighty power. Probably, most men suppose they need not much exhortation to this ; for who doth not grant it on all occasions ? But though it is in general granted, as eternal power is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being, yet few believe it for themselves, and as they ought. To believe the almighty power of God, with reference to our persons, and all our concerns, temporal and eternal, is in fact one of the highest and noblest acts of faith, and which includes in

it all others. It is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith, on entrance into covenant with him, Gen. xvii. 1: "I am God Almighty;" but it is that in which God sees it is necessary for him frequently to instruct his people.

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God to his glory, or with any real peace or comfort respecting ourselves, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts of his almighty power. Every thing that befalls us, every thing that we hear of, in which is the least danger, will discompose our minds, and make us tremble like the leaves of the forest shaken with the wind; or make us fly to foolish or sinful relief, unless we are firmly established in the faith hereof.

If we consider the promises of God unto his church, as yet unaccomplished, and take a view of the present state of the church in the world, in all the fears, dangers and evils to which it is exposed, we shall quickly find, that unless this sheet-anchor be well fixed, we shall be tossed up and down, and exposed to most violent temptations. Take *one instance*, which is

the common concern of all men, unless of those who live and die like beasts, and who are under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state. We are obnoxious to death every moment, which will lay our bodies in the dust; and from whence they will have no more disposition or power in themselves to *rise again*, than any other part of the mould of the earth. Their recovery must be an act of almighty power; now what comfort, what satisfaction can any man have in his life, on which his all depends, and which is passing from him every moment, unless he hath continual thoughts of the mighty power of God, whereby he is able to receive his departing soul into the invisible world, and to raise his body out of the dust, and invest it with life eternal?

Not to insist on more particulars, thus it is with them who are spiritually minded, and thus it must be with us, if we pretend a title to that privilege, or would class among them. They are filled with thoughts of God, in opposition to that character of wicked men, that God is not in all their thoughts. They have regard to his divine

attributes, and to all the distinguishing relations he hath taken on himself towards them, with all the effects of his covenant in Christ Jesus: and they not only think much of God, but they take delight in these thoughts; they are sweet unto them; they rejoice at the remembrance of what he is, and what he will be unto them, and they have no solid joy but in thoughts of God; to which therefore they continually retreat, and in which they find relief and comfort against all that they feel or fear.

The advantages we receive thereby are innumerable; our *faith* as to invisible things, and our *trust* in God, will be greatly increased and strengthened thereby. It will give life and exercise to the grace of *hope*; as the especial objects of hope, are God in Christ and eternal glory. This alone also will make us *ready for the cross*, for all sorts of sufferings; and we shall acquire a *holy resignation* of our persons, lives, families, and all our enjoyments, to the wisdom and sovereign will of God. And this exercise of the thoughts is likewise the most effectual means to wean the hearts and affections from things

on earth, and to prepare the soul for the sight of God and enjoyments of heaven.

But notwithstanding the many motives we have to this duty of fixing our thoughts on God and heavenly things, and the unspeakable advantages which are connected with it ; is it not to be feared, that many of us, when weighed in the balance of God's word, will be found too light ? To be spiritually minded, is not merely an abstinence from outward sins, and performing external duties, though with diligence and constancy ; all this may be done on such principles, and for such ends, and with such a frame of heart, as to find no acceptance with God. Our hearts he requireth, and we can no way give them unto him, but by our affections, and abounding in holy thoughts of him with delight. Let no man deceive himself ; unless he thus abounds in thoughts of these particular objects, unless his meditation of God and his attributes be sweet unto him, all that he pretends to and places his hope in, will fail him in the day of trial.

But as there are, or may be, some Christians, who through a consciousness

of their deficiency in the discharge of this part of the duty of spiritual mindedness, may fall under many discouragements and fears; it becomes the minister to follow Him "who will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed;" and therefore I shall attempt to offer something for the relief and comfort of those that are sincere, but sorrowful under a sense of their weakness.

CHAP. VI.

*Containing directions to those that complain
of instability of spiritual thoughts : and
some rules for attaining and establishing
a holy frame of mind.*

It hath been the complaint of many, that among all the branches of their duty to God, there is not one in which they are more at a loss than this “fixing and exercising their thoughts on things spiritual and heavenly.” They often attempt it, (knowing it to be their duty, and being persuaded of its excellency,) but their minds are unsteady, their abilities small, their invention barren, their memories frail, and their judgments weak, unable to dispose of things into a proper order ; they know not what to think upon for the most part, and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss, cannot make any progress, and so give over. Hence other thoughts, or thoughts

of other things, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in spiritual meditation, ends in *carnal vanity*. On these accounts, some are often discouraged to enter on the duty; and many give it over as soon as it is begun, ashamed both of it and themselves. Unto such as are really concerned in these things, whose deficiency in the duty is a burden, who mourn under and desire to be freed from it, I would offer the following particulars:

1. As our defect in this part of our duty to God, proves the vanity of the mind, so the consideration thereof should *humble and abase us*. Whence is it that we cannot abide in contemplation of spiritual things? Is it because they are things in which we have no concern? Or are they so worthless and unprofitable, that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them? Rather, are they not of all things most worthy, useful, and desirable; and compared with which, all other things are but loss and dung? Or is it thus with us in this duty, because the faculties and powers of our souls were not originally suited to the contemplation of things divine and heavenly? Far be it: the soul was cre-

ated of God for this very end, fitted with inclinations to abide with him in all things without distaste, without weariness. Nothing was more natural, easy, and pleasant unto the soul, than steadiness in the contemplation of God and His works. The CAUSE, then of all this evil lies at our own door; this, together with other evils, came upon us by the *entrance of sin*; hereby our minds were wholly turned off from God, and centered in things vain, sensual, and wicked. By grace our minds are renewed, or changed and delivered from this frame and disposition, but this only partially; the principle of vanity is no longer predominant, to alienate us from the life of God, or to keep us in enmity against him; the renewed do not walk in the vanity of their minds as do others, but yet such a wound, such a weakness remains, as both weakens and hinders them in most, if not all, the operations of spiritual life. They who have made any progress in grace, are sensible of their vanity; it is the greatest burden of their souls, and they groan after so complete a renovation of the mind, as thereby they might be perfectly freed from *that* which

often defeats them in their designs to meditate on heavenly things, frustrates their best resolutions, and imposes on them thoughts of such things as, from their nature or consequences, they utterly abhor. It is this internal vanity of mind that endeavours to betray us, and to weaken our graces, or to hinder their due operations; and it strives also to open the doors of the heart to our greatest enemies; if our chief aim, therefore, be not to discover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in the spiritual warfare:

But this being the *original cause* of all that inability of mind whereof you complain; cultivate HUMILITY in the inward thought, and walk under a sense of the remains of this vanity of mind. Thus wholesome fruits may be gathered from this bitter root, and meat may come out of the eater. If, when we cannot abide in holy thoughts of God, and our relation to him, we reflect on this cause of it, to our further humiliation and self-abasement, our good designs and purposes are not lost. Such thoughts may be as useful as those we first designed. It should be observed, that unchangeable cleaving

unto God, in all the powers and affections of our minds, is reserved for heaven: but though we cannot attain perfection in this matter, yet greater degrees may be attained; such as I fear few have experience of, but which is our duty to be continually pressing after. If we are wise, we shall endeavour such a cure of this spiritual malady, as to be able to discharge all the duties of the life of God. But, if men feed the vanity of their own minds, if they permit them to rove continually after things foolish, earthly, and sensual, and wilfully supply them with objects to that end, and labour not for the mortification of this evil frame, in vain shall they expect to bring their minds at any time, or on any occasion, to be steady in the thoughts of heavenly things. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with numbers of professors, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good," and not before. When the power of sanctifying grace hath made the mind *habitually* spiritual and heavenly, thoughts of such things will be natural unto us, and accompanied with delight.

2. Be always sensible of your *insufficiency to raise*, or to *manage* spiritual thoughts duly, in your minds. But in this case men are apt to suppose, that they can think of what they please, and that their thoughts, of whatever kind, are their own; and therefore they need no assistance. And nothing will convince them of their folly until they are burdened with an experience of the contrary, respecting spiritual things. The advice is clear and express, 2 Cor. iii. 5: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." The Apostle speaks principally of himself, and other Ministers of the Gospel, of such as were most eminently furnished with spiritual gifts and graces; and if it be so with them, and that with respect to the work and duties of their callings, how much more is it so with others, who have not their graces nor office! If men do suppose that of themselves, exclusive of divine grace and the supplies of the Holy Spirit, they can exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts, no wonder they are disappointed, disquieted, and live barren and joyless all their days.

By strength of *natural abilities*, men may frame thoughts of God and heavenly things in their minds; they may metho-dize them by *rules of art*, and express them elegantly to others: but, even while they do so, they may be far enough from being spiritually minded; in their thoughts there may be no actings of faith, love, or holy delight in God, or of any grace at all. But such alone are the things we should inquire after, as in these only, spiritual mindedness is properly exercised and evidenced; and with respect unto these, all our sufficiency must be of God. There is no truth more generally granted by persons of understanding, in notion or theory, than this, "that of ourselves we can do nothing;" and yet none more neglected in daily practice. Men profess they can do nothing of themselves, and yet engage both in religious duties, and in their temporal concerns, as if they could do all things.

3. Though you should be unskilful in, and not able to carry on a *regular, stated meditation* on spiritual subjects, yet you may be spiritually minded. For there is required in solemn, stated meditations,

such an exercise of natural faculties and abilities, as some through ignorance and weakness are incapable of. A man may not have capacity and ability to carry on an extensive merchandize in the world; the knowledge of the different climates and seasons, and of the several productions and commodities of the nations of the earth, with the arts, contrivances, and accounts which belong to a large foreign trade, may be above his comprehension, and he may quickly ruin himself in the undertaking. Yet the abilities of this man may serve and enable him to carry on a retail business in a small shop; and wherein he may possibly thrive as well, and get as good an estate, as any of those whose greater capacities lead them forth to more extensive and hazardous undertakings. So in a spiritual respect, the natural faculties of some are not sufficient for a stated meditation: they cannot place things in that method and order which is requisite, nor can they frame the conceptions of their minds into words significant and expressive; yet as to frequent thoughts of God, and a spiritual disposition of mind, they may thrive, and be

skilful beyond most others of greater natural abilities.

But as *stated meditation* is a necessary duty, yea, the principal way whereby our spiritual thoughts do profitably exercise themselves; I would add another direction.

5. Whatever gracious principle resides in the mind, we cannot *attain to a ready exercise* thereof in a way of spiritual meditation, without *great diligence and great difficulty*. Unless the most fruitful ground be manured, it will not bring forth a good or profitable crop. As well may a poor man expect to be rich, without industry; or a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise; as for any professor to be spiritually minded, without earnest endeavours after it. Do you inquire what is requisite thereunto? I will suggest a FEW RULES which are necessary to be observed, but if disregarded, such an holy frame will not be attained.

1. *A continual watch is to be kept against the incursions of vain thoughts, especially in those seasons, wherein they are apt to obtain advantage.* If they are suffered to

make an inroad into the mind, and we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, and suffer them to lodge within; in vain shall we hope to be spiritually minded. Herein consists a principal part of that duty which our Saviour so frequently, so emphatically, chargeth on us, **TO WATCH**. And unless we keep a strict watch, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our spiritual enemies; for all such thoughts are but making provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires in the lusts thereof, however they may be disappointed as to actual sin. Always should we remember the advice, Prov. iv. 23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

2. *Carefully avoid all societies, and callings in life, which are apt to seduce the mind to an earthly and sensual frame.* If men will venture on those things which they have found by **EXPERIENCE**, or may find by **OBSERVATION**, do draw off the soul from an heavenly frame, unto that which is contrary thereto; they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. And with lamentation I add, that professors, by their common conversation with one

another, and with others, walking, talking, and behaving themselves like other men; and being as full of the world, as the world is of itself; they have hereby lost the grace of being spiritually minded within, and stained the glory of profession without. The rule observed by David will manifest how careful we ought to be in this respect. Psalm xxxix. 1—3: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me: I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred; my heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue."

3. *Put an holy constraint on the mind to abide in spiritual thoughts and meditations.* This rule is as the duty, both necessary and useful. The mind is too prone to start aside from duties PURELY SPIRITUAL, through the mixture of the flesh abiding in it; the more inward and spiritual any duty is, and which hath no external advantages, the readier is the soul to decline it. As for instance, it will be more apt to decline private, than pub-

lie prayer; and sooner omit meditation than prayer. And other things likewise will draw it aside, by objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. An holy constraint is therefore to be put upon it, with a sudden rejection of what starts up to divert or disturb the mind. And we should call in all constraining motives (as the love of God, and of Christ) to keep the mind steady to its duty.

4. *Diligently endeavour in the use of means to furnish the soul with that knowledge of heavenly things, which may administer continual matter of spiritual thoughts from within ourselves.* The want hereof is that which keeps many from proficiency in this duty. As a man may have some skill or ability for a trade, but if he hath no materials, he must sit still and let his trade alone; so must professors do, as to the work of holy meditation. Whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, invention, or memory, if they are not furnished with knowledge of spiritual things, which are the subject matter of such meditation, they must let it alone. Hence the Apostle exhorts the Colossians,

to "let the word of Christ dwell richly in them with all wisdom;" and unless we abound in the knowledge of the mind of Christ, we shall be unfit for the duty.

5. *We must be unwearied in our conflict with Satan, the evil one.* By various artifices he continually labours to divert us from religious duties; and with respect to this duty, when we stand thus before the Lord, he is always at our right hand to resist us. To this must be referred men's taking up with trifles when they have set themselves to the duty, and ending the exercise in vain imaginations. Steadiness in the resistance of him on these occasions, is one great part of our spiritual warfare; and foolish or corrupt thoughts are his engines, which it becomes the Christian to resist at all times, especially when engaging in spiritual meditation.

6. *We should be moderate in our endeavours after the needful things of this life, and have our affections to the world mortified.* Otherwise, no man can be said to be spiritually minded, the affections cannot be under the power of divine grace, nor can spiritual things be relished. Per-

haps some may say, "That if all these things are requisite, it will take up a man's whole time to be spiritually minded; but they hope to attain it at an easier rate." Though it may prove an hard saying to some, yet I must, and my heart would reproach me, if I should not say, that if the *principal part of our time* be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have neither life nor peace. The first-fruits of all were to be offered unto God. If the best be not his, he will have nothing; it is so as to our time. And tell me, how can you spend your time better, or your lives to better purpose? Some spend so much of their time in *things*, as is both a shame to themselves, and matter of continual sorrow to their Christian friends. Do you think you had existence merely to spend your time and strength in trades and in pleasures, or to the satisfaction of the hurtful lusts of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably, it may be corruptly, in all sorts of unnecessary societies; but have not time enough to live unto God? Observe and consider, you came into the

world under this law, "It is appointed to all men once to die, and after that is the judgment." The end why life is granted to us here, is, that we may be prepared for that judgment; if this be neglected, if the chief part of our time be not improved to this great end, you will fall under the awful sentence of it unto eternity.

But as men are apt to mistake in this matter, I would be a little more particular. If you suppose that the things which have been suggested as your duty, do tend to take you off from lawful employments and recreations, and therefore you are unwilling to purchase any frame of mind at so dear a rate; or if you think, that to be spiritually minded you must be moped, and disregard the common business of life, you are mistaken, and may be assured I am on no such design. I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly callings, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into union with, and a management of them. The things mentioned will deprive you of no time to which you can justly lay claim, but will sanctify it all. Industry in temporal

affairs is in itself very commendable ; if in nothing else, it hath this advantage, that it is a means of preserving men from those excesses in lust and vices, which otherwise they would very likely run into. And among the two classes into which mankind are generally distributed, those who are *industrious in life* are far more amiable and useful than such as *spend their time in idleness and pleasure*. However, industry, is capable of being greatly abused; by devouring the time and seasons of religious duties,—by earthly mindedness, covetousness, and the like pernicious vices invading and possessing the mind. There is no lawful calling or occupation in life that absolutely excludes spiritual mindedness from them engaged in it; nor is there any that doth necessarily include it. *Men may be in the meanest of employments, and be possessed of the grace ; and others may be in the best and highest, and nevertheless be destitute thereof*. It may be said, “ Surely MINISTERS must needs be spiritually minded, as it is their duty and work merely to study spiritual and heavenly things, to meditate on, commit them to memory,

and speak of them unto others." But, awful thought! a man may with great industry engage in these things, and yet his mind be remote from being spiritual. The event declares it may be so, and the reasons of it are manifest. It requires as much, if not more watchfulness, care, and humility, for a minister to be spiritually minded in the discharge of his calling, than to any else of mankind in theirs. And that (as for other reasons, so) because the commonness of the exercise of such thoughts, with their design upon others in their expressions, will take off their power and efficacy. He will have little benefit by his own ministry, who in the first place doth not seek an experience in his own heart, of the power of the truths which he teaches unto others. And there is evidently as great a failing among ministers, as among any other sort of Christians.

In the exercise of industry in any calling, unless men labour also to be spiritually minded, there can be no profitable fruits, neither life nor peace. To this, all the rules or things just mentioned are necessary; I know not how any of

them can be abated ; yea, more is required than is expressed in them. If you *burn this roll*, another must be written, and many things of the like nature must be added unto it. You see the objection, from the expense of time in their observance, is of no force ; for a man may do as much work, when he is spiritually minded, as whilst he was carnal. Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder men in their business, than thoughts which are vain, and earthly, for which all sorts of men can find leisure, even in the midst of their employments. If it be necessary that you should take much of the chaff of the world into the mind, yet is it capable of such measures of grace, as shall preserve it sincere towards God.

7. *We must dedicate some part of our time peculiarly to religious duties ;* else they will never be performed in a proper manner, nor can spiritual mindedness be preserved. Some Christians have by experience found the usefulness of this rule : but, yet how many, if they lose their seasons, lose also their duties ! It hath been the complaint of some, “ that the urgency of business and multiplicity of temporal

affairs, driving them at first from the fixed time of their religious exercises, brought them afterwards into a course of neglecting the duty itself." It is our wisdom, therefore, to set apart constantly some portion of time for exercising our thoughts about spiritual things; yea, it is our indispensable duty to redeem time for this purpose; and if you seriously intend holy meditation, choose those seasons for it wherein you are best able to discharge it, *when the natural vigour of the spirit is most free and active*. Possibly some may say, "This may be such a time, as the concerns of the world do most earnestly call for, and on which they require our attendance." True, that is the season I would recommend. The more the purchase of it stands us in, the more useful may the season be. We are not at *any time* to serve God; if we will allow only the refuse of our time to this duty, when we have nothing else to do, and it may be through a bustle in the world are fit for nothing else, we are not to expect any great success in it. This is one pregnant reason why professors are so cold, formal, lifeless in spiritual duties, namely, "the

times and seasons which they allot to them." When the body is wearied with the labours and occasions of the day, and probably the mind indisposed in its natural faculties and powers, even by the means of necessary refreshment for the body; THEN men think themselves meet to treat with God about the great concerns of his glory and their own souls. But this is condemned by the prophet Malachi, i. 8: "If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" Shall we think to offer that time unto God, in which we are unmeet to appear before an earthly ruler? And yet in my account such are the seasons, especially the *night seasons*, which most men choose for the duties of religion. As the time itself should be a free-will offering unto God, and as the law of nature, and all the laws of holy institutions do require, that we should serve God with the best that we have; so let us henceforth devote the choicest part of our useful time unto him. And to excite you to greater diligence in

futurity, consider, how little of your time you have as yet offered to God, beyond the day which he hath demanded for himself by an everlasting law ; nay, it is well if we have not robbed him of a large portion of that appropriated time.

8. *A reverence of God and spiritual things, must not only be habitual and cherished in the mind, but always exercised in our entrance on religious duties.* If we rush into thoughts of heavenly things, without a due, reverential preparation, we shall quickly find ourselves at a loss : “ Grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear,” is required in all things wherein we have to do with him. Endeavour, therefore, to get your hearts deeply affected with an awful reverence of God, and an holy regard unto the nature and excellency of the things you would meditate upon ; hereby your minds will be composed, and the vain and earthly thoughts which are apt to arise and divert you from the duty, will be cast out. If various thoughts do conflict in our minds, some for this world, and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a season ; but where a due

reverence of God hath cast out the bond-woman and her children, *vain thoughts and imaginations*—the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things. Should you after this previous preparation find yourselves perplexed or lifeless, not able to persist in spiritual thoughts with freedom and delight, then

9. *Cry to God for assistance*; supply the brokenness of your thoughts with PRAYER, according as either the matter or your infirmities do require; bewail the darkness, instability, and weakness of your minds, so as to groan within for deliverance and help; and if your designed meditations do issue only in a renewed sense of your own insufficiency, with application to God for supplies, they are by no means lost as to a spiritual account. When the soul labours for communion with God, but sinks into broken, confused thoughts, under its own weakness; yet, if the Christian looks to God for relief, his mourning and petitions will be accepted with his Maker, and be profitable unto himself.

If any should think, after reading these directions and rules, that both the frame

of mind and the right discharge of this duty may be otherwise attained; if you suppose that spiritual mindedness and holy meditation deserve not all this cost and charge, judge by what is past, whether it be not advisable to give over and let them alone. It is as good lie quietly on the ground as continually attempt to rise and never once effect it. Shall I call upon you to remember how many unsuccessful attempts you have already made, and all have come to nothing, or to that which is as bad as nothing? I cannot say that, in the way now recommended, you will always succeed; but I fear you will never have success in this duty without attending to such methods and things as are of the same nature and tendency with those prescribed. I will only add,

10. *Be not discouraged with an apprehension that all you can attain to in the discharge of this duty is so little, so contemptible, that it is to no purpose to persist in it. Nor be ye wearied with the difficulties you encounter in its performance. You have to do with Him who will not break the bruised reed, and whose will it*

is, that none should despise the day of small things. If there be in this day a **READY MIND**, it is accepted. He that can bring into this treasure only the mites of broken desires and ejaculatory prayers, so they be his best, shall not come behind them who cast into it out of their greater abundance in skill and ability. To faint and give out, because we cannot arise to such a height as we aim at, is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who gains nothing else by continual endeavours after holy, fixed meditations, but only an *active sense of his own unworthiness*, is a sufficient gainer amidst all his pains ; but ordinarily it shall not be so : constancy in the duty will give ability for it. They who conscientiously abide in it, shall increase in light, wisdom, and experience, till they are able to prosecute it with greater success.

CHAP. VII.

The grace and duty of spiritual mindedness stated in, and evidenced by, our affections.

IN the beginning of this treatise spiritual mindedness was reduced to three heads :

I. The usual exercise of the mind in its THOUGHTS and MEDITATIONS ON heavenly things.

II. The habitual frame and inclination of the mind in its AFFECTIONS. And,

III. A COMPLACENCY OF MIND from the satisfaction and delight it finds in spiritual things.

The first hath been largely considered as that which leads to the others, and gives the most *sensible evidence* of the state inquired after. It is the stream which, rising in the fountain of our affections, glides into an holy rest and complacency of soul. The two last I shall now discuss together, and therein briefly comprehend what it is to be spiritually minded.

The great contest of heaven and earth is about the affections of the poor worm, which we call man. That the world should contend for them is no wonder; it is the best to which it can pretend. All things here below are capable of no higher ambition than to be possessed of the affections of men; but that the holy God should engage in the contest, and strive for our affections, is an effect of infinite condescension and grace. Our affections, he asketh for, "My son, give me thine heart," and we may be assured, he will accept nothing from us without the affections. They are our all, the only power of our souls, by which we may give away ourselves, even from ourselves, and become another's. Unto whom we give our affections, unto him we give ourselves, our all; and unto whom we give them not, whatever we give, in a sense we give nothing at all. For in what we do to, or for others, whatsoever is good, valuable, or praise-worthy in it, proceeds from the affections with which it is done. To give to the poor without pity or compassion, to supply the wants of the saints without love and kindness, with other ac-

tions and duties of the like nature, are things of no value, and will recommend us neither to God nor men. Whatever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on his command, whatever we suffer for his name sake, if it proceed not from a cleaving of the soul to him by our affections, it is contemned by him, and he owns us not. So, if a man would give to God all the substance of his house without love, it would in like manner be despised. On the other hand, however diligent, industrious, and sedulous we may be in and about the things of the world, yet, if it hath not our affections, we are not of the world. Affections are the seat of all sincerity, and are in the soul as the helm in a ship; if it be held by a skilful hand, he turneth the whole vessel whichever way he pleaseth. If God's powerful hand of grace is upon our affections, he turns our souls to a compliance with his institutions, instructions, and all sorts of providential dispensations; and he holds them firm against all winds and storms of temptation, so as they shall not be hurried on pernicious dangers. And when the world

hath the hand on the affections, it turns the mind, with the whole soul, to its interest and concerns; and it is in vain to contend with any thing that hath the power of our affections in its disposal,—for it will prevail.

It is therefore of the highest importance rightly to consider how things are stated in our affections, and what is the prevailing bent of them. Our affections are either spiritual or earthly. God or the world must have our hearts; and our predominant inclination or edge is towards heaven, or towards things here below. But, before we consider the nature and operations of spiritual affections, it will not be improper to attend to those motives which God is pleased to use to call off our affections from earthly things. They are such as cannot be neglected without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness; and they may be instrumental of engaging us to set our affections on things above, which is to be spiritually minded.

1. *God hath in all manner of instances poured contempt on the things of this world in comparison of those which are spiritual*

and heavenly. All things here below were at first exceeding good, not only in their nature, but in the use to which they were designed; they were then desirable, and the enjoyment of them would have been a blessing without danger of temptation; for they were the ordinance of God, to lead us to the knowledge and love of him. But since the entrance of sin, whereby the world fell under the curse, and into the power of Satan, the things of it, by his influence, are too effectual to draw off the heart and affections from God. By them doth the adversary of souls blind the eyes of such as believe not, and the chief way by which he doth it is, by promises of satisfaction unto all the lusts of the mind, with a proposal of all that is dreadful in the want of them. The things of the world being in this state, and used to this end, through the craft of the evil one, and the folly of the human mind, God hath shewn, by VARIOUS INSTANCES, that they are all vain, unsatisfactory, and every way to be despised, in comparison of things eternal.

He did it most signally *in the life and death of Christ*. What can be seen or

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found in this world, after the Son of God hath spent his life in it, not having where to lay his head ; and after he went out of it on a cross ? Had there been aught of real worth in things here below, certainly he had enjoyed, if not crowns and empires, which were all in his power, yet such goods and possessions, as men of sober reason and moderate affections do esteem a competency. But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest, that there is nothing of value or use in these things, but only to support nature to the performing service unto God, by which they are serviceable to eternity. Christ never attained, he never enjoyed more than *daily supplies of bread* out of the stores of providence, and for which alone he hath instructed us to pray ; and in his cross, the world proclaimed all its good qualities and powers, and hath given to the Christian its naked face to view and contemplate. Hence is that inference of the apostle, Gal. vi. 14 : " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Since I believed in Christ, since I have

had a sense of the power and virtue of his cross, I have done with all things in this world ; it is a dead thing unto me, nor have I any affection for it. No man can set his affections on earthly things, who hath any regard to the pattern of Christ, or is in any measure influenced by the efficacy of his cross. MY LOVE IS CRUCIFIED, said an holy martyr ; he, whom his soul loved, was so ; and in him, his love to all things here below. Oh, that any of us should inordinately love the things of this world, and perplex ourselves about the power, riches, and goods of it, who have had a spiritual view of them in the cross of Christ !

It may be said, that the circumstances mentioned were necessary to the Son of God, as the saviour and redeemer of the church, and therefore it doth not follow, that we ought to be poor, and to want all things as he did. I confess it doth not, and therefore recommend industry in the various callings of life. But as it is to be feared this plea, and others which have been offered, “ as providing only a competency for me and my children, to secure some satisfaction in life, and reputation

in the world," &c. have often been but coverings for a shameful attachment and engagement of their affections unto the world; so this necessarily follows from the example of Christ, that what he did forego and trample on for our sakes, ought not to be the object of our affections; nor can such affections prevail in us, if he dwells in our hearts by faith.

Again, God hath poured contempt on carnal things *in his dealings with the apostles, and generally with all that have been most dear unto him.* The apostles were employed in a work of the greatest advantage to his interest and kingdom; to them was committed the laying the foundation of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world. Who would not think that he should provide for them, if not *Principalities* and *Popedom*s, yet at least *ARCHBISHOPRICS* and *BISHOPRICS*, with other good ecclesiastical dignities, livings, and preferments? Hereby they would have been meet to have conversed with princes, and been freed from the caprice and contempt of the vulgar; but we see Infinite Wisdom otherwise disposed of them and their concerns in this world. They were

exercised not only with the common afflictions and calamities of this life, but they lived and died in a condition of poverty, reproach, distress, and persecution. God set them forth as examples unto nobler ends, namely, of light, grace, zeal, and holiness ; and likewise to manifest of how little concern to our real blessedness is the abundance of things here below, and to demonstrate that the want of all may consist with the highest participation of the Divine love and favour. Read 1 Cor. iv. 7, and the following verses. If the consideration hereof hath no weight with others, undoubtedly it ought to have with such as are called to preach the Gospel, and are *successors to the apostles*. There can be nothing more absurd and shameful, nothing more opposite to the intimation of the wisdom and will of God, in his dealings with the first and most honourable dispensers of it, than for such persons to seek and press greedily after secular advantages in worldly titles, honours, wealth, and power. Hence, there have been endeavours to separate those who were dedicated to the ministry of the Gospel, from all secular dignities and

revenues, and some have maintained, that they were to live on the free contributions of the people. But this tenet was quickly condemned as HERESY in honest Wickliff, and the *clergy* have gotten the victory, and now esteem all due unto them that they can by any means obtain. But from the beginning it was not so; and it is well, *if in such a way*, men are able to maintain the frame of mind we are inquiring after, with which are connected life and peace.

Again, God continues to cast contempt on earthly things, by *giving always the greatest portion to his avowed enemies*. This was a temptation under the old covenant, but is highly instructive under the new; none will judge those things to be of real value, which a wise man casts out daily unto swine, making little or no use of them in his family. Those monsters of men, Nero and Heliogabalus, so pernicious to human society, that their *not being*, would have been to appearance the interest of mankind, had more power over the things of this world, than ever had the best of men: look on all the principal treasures and powers of this world

as in the hand of one of these tyrants, and so disposed of by Divine Providence, and you may see at what rate God values them. Doth not God proclaim herein, that the things of this world are not to be so esteemed? If they were, and had a real worth in themselves, would the righteous God make such a distribution of them? Those whom he most esteems, have comparatively the meanest share, and many are exercised with all the evils with which the want of them can be attended, while his open and avowed enemies have more than they know what to do with. Who then would set their affections on those things which God poureth into the bosoms of the vilest of men? It plainly appears, you may go and take the world, and take a curse, death, and hell, along with it; and, "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What can any man do, who considers this, and who will not forego all his hopes and expectations from God; but *retreat unto the faith and pursuit of things spiritual and eternal*, as containing an excellency in them incomparably above all that may be enjoyed here below?

Again, God pours contempt on earthly things, in giving *continual instances of their uncertainty and emptiness*, utterly disappointing many that have had expectations from them. The ways are various, the instances so multiplied, that the greater part of mankind (unless they are like the fool in the Gospel) do live in perpetual fears or apprehensions, that they shall speedily lose what they enjoy; or otherwise they must be under the power of a stupid security: but, there is such an account given of them by the wise man, Eccles. ii., unto which nothing can be added, and which neither reason, nor experience, is able to contradict.

By these, and the like ways, doth God cast contempt on all things here below; discovering both the folly and falsehood of the promises which the world makes to decoy and entangle our affections. This, therefore, is to be laid as the **FOUNDATION** in all our considerations to what, or to whom, we shall cleave with our affections; that God hath not only declared the insufficiency of earthly things, to give us that rest and happiness after which we seek, but hath also poured con-

tempt upon them in his holy and wise disposal of them in the world.

2. *God hath added to their vanity by shortening the lives of men, reducing their continuance here to so short and uncertain a season, as it is impossible they can take any solid satisfaction in what they enjoy here below.* "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand's breadth, and mine age is nothing before thee." Hence the Psalmist draws two conclusions: (1.) "That every man at his best estate is but vanity." (2.) "That every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain, he heapeth up riches, and knows not who shall gather them." Psalm xxxix. 5, 6. When men lived *eight or nine hundred years*, they had opportunity to taste all the sweetness that was in creature comforts, to make large provisions of, and to have long projections about them; but when they had so, they all issued in that wickedness, which "brought the flood on the world of ungodly men." And the case is the same to this day; the more men enjoy of this world, and the longer they possess earthly things, the more will they abound in sin, and provoke God,

unless divine grace interposes. But, now God hath reduced the life of man to the small pittance of *seventy years*, and that space is generally shortened, or embittered by various and innumerable incidents. Some years pass before men begin to have a taste of this life; many things occur to make us weary of them before the end of our days; and but few of the human race, not one of a thousand, attain the years beyond which nothing can be reckoned but travail and sorrow. As, then, the all-wise God hath left no such season for the enjoyment of the world, as might put a value upon it; so the uncertainty and shortness of human life (the strongest of mankind cannot insure the next day) render all contrivances and endeavours about earthly things, both vain and foolish. And when it is remembered, that he whose continuance is so short and uncertain here, is notwithstanding a candidate for eternal happiness or misery; and that his blessedness depends wholly on setting his affections on things above; must not all they who place them on things below forfeit all pretensions to reason, as well as bid defiance to the grace of God?

3. *God hath openly and fully declared the danger there is in these things, as to their enjoyment and use.* What multitudes of souls miscarry by an inordinate adherence to them? They are the matter of those temptations whereby the souls of men are ruined for ever: the fuel that supplies the fire of their lusts, until they are consumed by it. Though there are many principles of temptation, many causes which concur to its efficacy, as sin, Satan, and wicked men; yet the matter of almost all ruinous temptations, is taken from among the things of this world: and indeed every thing that is in the world, is too apt to be abused to that end. It were easy to show, that there is nothing desirable or valuable in the whole world, but is reducible to a subserviency to one or other of the lusts of the mind, and is applicable to the interest and service of temptations and sins. When some professors hear these things, they are apt to say, "Let the dream be to them that are openly wicked, and the interpretation of it unto them that are profligate in sin: unto unclean persons, unto drunkards, oppressors, proud and ambitious persons,

may be it is so ; but as for us, we use the things of this world with a due moderation, and they are no snare unto us." But to own they are used to what end soever, if the affections are set upon them, there is nothing but, one way or other, is thus a snare and a temptation. We should be very careful how we adhere to, or value THAT which is the cause and means of the ruin of multitudes of souls. By the warning given us hereof, God evidently designs to teach us the vanity and danger of fixing our affections on things below.

4. *By means of God's providential dispensations respecting these things, much wisdom is requisite to distinguish betwixt the use and the abuse, betwixt a lawful care about, and an inordinate cleaving to them.* Few distinguish aright here, and many will find their great mistake in these things at the last day. Too many men deceive themselves in judging and acting by the most crooked and uncertain rules. Some make their own inclinations the rule and measure of what is proper and lawful ; some, the examples of others ; some, the course of the world ; some,

their own real or pretended necessities. All of them confess, that there may be an inordinate love, and an abuse of earthly things, as the Scripture plainly affirms, and to which experience gives open testimony; but as to themselves, *their care, love, and industry*, concerning them, are all allowable. Hence, we see professors approving of themselves, as just stewards of their enjoyments: whilst their friends judge them covetous and earthly minded. And what if any of these self-approvers should be mistaken in their rule and application? Men at sea may have a fair gale of wind, wherewith they may sail smoothly for a season; and yet, instead of reaching a port, may by it be brought on destructive shoals, or rocks. What, if that which we esteem allowable, as love, care, and industry, should prove to be the *fruit of earthly affections*, predominant within us? What if that which we approve of in ourselves, should be *disapproved of God*? We are then cast off for ever: we belong to the world, and with the world we shall perish. You see it is a dangerous thing for any to incline in his affections to the things of this world,

because an excess is destructive, and at the same time scarcely discoverable. Surely no *wise man* will venture freely, and often, to the edge of such a precipice.

If any desire to be satisfied, whether they do lawfully use and enjoy earthly things, and would listen to advice for preventing inordinate affections—REMEMBER, you are not proprietors, nor absolute possessors, but only *stewards* of earthly things, under Him who is the great Lord and possessor of heaven and earth; and for all you have received, you must give an account before angels and men. REMEMBER, you have *another object* for your affections, infinitely more worthy, which ought to have a predominant interest in your minds, and which will, if the world hath not possession. If God; and the things of God, be not the chief objects of our affections, we belong to the world: “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” REMEMBER, that as it is your duty “to mortify your members that are upon the earth;” so it is *mortification* alone, that will take us off from earthly things to the glory of God: and unless

we experience this in our affections, we can have no good hope that we are in any thing spiritually minded. REMEMBER, in all instances of your duty, as stewards of earthly things, to attend diligently to the rule of God's word: else the grace exhorted to may be abused. Let neither self, nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the *divine rule alone* be attended to and cordially obeyed. Thus we may be preserved from (and have the evidence within ourselves, that we are not under) the power of an inordinate love to this world.

5. *God hath positively declared, that if we set our affections on things below, he will not acknowledge us; nor will he accept of those affections which we pretend to spare for him and spiritual things.* If we abstain from open sins; if we abhor the lewdness and irreligion of men of the world; if we are constant in religious duties, and walk after the strictest sect in religion; may we not be accepted of God, though our hearts should cleave to the world? I answer, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and, if other arguments will not prevail with us, he

leaves us at last to this: (1 John ii. 15; James iv.) "Go love the world, and the things of it; but know assuredly, you do it to the eternal loss of your souls."

These few arguments or motives, by which God is pleased to deter us from fixing our affections on earthly things, are such as he makes use of in the administration of his providence, and which I thought a proper introduction to the important subject before us—"To declare the interest of our affections in this frame of spiritual mindedness, and what they contribute to it." *Without spiritual affections we cannot be spiritually minded.* And that they may be of this use, *three things* are required, and should be regarded.

I. Their PRINCIPLE.

II. Their OBJECT.

III. The manner of their APPLICATION to their proper object by virtue of that principle.

1. As to the PRINCIPLE. That our affections may be spiritual, which is the foundation of the whole, the spring of our being spiritually minded, it is required, that they be ~~changed~~ or *renewed with divine grace.* To make this more

plain and obvious, let us consider what is their state *by nature*, and then, by what means they may be wrought on respecting a change or a *renovation*. The affections are not much unlike some things which in their own nature are poisonous, but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament from a mixture of other ingredients, they become medicinal, and of excellent use and benefit.

1. By nature our affections are all depraved. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen into greater disorder by the entrance of sin than are our affections. This depravation was manifest to the *heathen world*; the wisest among them both saw and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, and were thoroughly sensible of this disorder and tumult of the affections in things moral; therefore, seeing it is discernible by the light of nature, the neglect of those who are not sensible of it in themselves, under the light of the Gospel, is inexcusable, and greatly aggravated. Many instances might be given of the greatness of this depravation: as they are the seat of all

lusts both of the flesh and of the spirit; as they are the spring and cause of all the actual sin that is in the world; as they are the way and means by which the soul applies itself to all sinful objects: so the affections will not be under the conduct of the mind. *Rebellion against the light and convictions of the mind* is the very form by which this depravation manifests itself; let the apprehensions of the mind, and its notions of good and evil, be what they will, the affections reject them, and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations. Hence no natural or unconverted man living doth in any measure answer the light of his mind or the convictions of his understanding; though he sees and approves of better things, yet he follows those which are forbidden and vicious. No greater spiritual judgment can there be, than for men to be given up to their own evil affections. Rom. i. 26.

In general this depravation of our affections may be reduced to two particulars; an *aversion from God and spiritual things*, which is the spring of all that dislike of God and his ways, with which the hearts of men are filled, which prompts them to

say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" and an *inordinate cleaving unto things vain, earthly, and sensual*, which causes the soul to engage in the pursuit of them, as a horse rushes into the battle.

Whilst our affections are in this state, we are far enough from being spiritually minded; nor is it possible to engage them in an adherence to, or a delight in, spiritual things. And it ought to be observed, that whilst in this condition the affections may be wrought upon two several ways, and yet not so renewed as to be serviceable to this end.

First, There may be *various temporary impressions* made on them by the preaching of the word of God, or by judgments, dangers, diseases, and lively apprehensions of the approach of death. By a variety of causes, such impressions have been made on the affections, as have seemed for a season to have turned the stream of them. Hence we have many who one day will be wholly for God, and resolved to crucify the flesh and the world, and to forsake sin and the plea-

asures of it; but the next, behold they return to all their former excesses and delights. From these occasional impressions some may and do persuade themselves that there is a change in their hearts and affections when there is not; like a person who flatters himself that he hath lost his ague because his present fit is over. These impressions, when made on *spiritual affections*, are of great advantage to the soul; they make it renew its engagements to God and duty, with love and resolution more intense. But the effects of these impressions on *unrenewed affections* are neither spiritual nor durable: for the most part they are but providential checks to the raging of their lusts; the next trial of temptation carries them away again to the world, and to sin.

Secondly, There may be an *habitual change* in the passions and affections of the mind as to the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, and yet no gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts, have wrought this change: hereby persons naturally passionate and furious, have been made

sedate and cool; those who have been sensual, have become temperate; yea, and haters of religion have become zealous professors of it. These things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought only on the affections, whilst the mind, will, and conscience, have been totally unsanctified. It is admirable to think to what degrees of eminence in sobriety, fidelity, charity, and in all sorts of moral virtues, many among the Heathens attained by this one principle of moderating the affections. But by this change, where it is alone, no man ever became spiritually minded. At least this change may be, and yet their dislike of God, and inattention and disrelish to spiritual things, not be cured. This alteration doth but turn the course of men's affections; the nature is not changed; they are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were. Yet this is beautiful and desirable in nature, and the glory of it; and he who hath by any means proceeded to such a moderation of his affections, as to be kind, benign, patient, public-spirited, and temperate in all things, such an one will rise up in

judgment against those who, professing themselves enlightened by divine grace, do nevertheless manifest, by being morose, impatient, angry, selfish, and worldly, that they are not subdued by the power of that grace.

That we may be spiritually minded, there is something else required as to our affections than *temporary* and *occasional impressions*, with which many poor souls deceive themselves, and cry, Peace, peace, when there is no peace—or than an *habitual change*, by which the affections are brought into some order with respect to earthly things; but their nature altered from rational to spiritual. There must be another work upon our affections, even INTERNAL RENOVATION, whereby not merely the course of their operations is changed, but their nature is altered and spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in the great evangelical promise, Isaiah xi. 6—9: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. And the ewe and the bear shall feed; their young

ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp ; and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." You see a change is promised in the natures, principles, and inclinations of the worst, the most savage sinners, who experience the power of Gospel-grace.

This is that which is enjoined in a way of duty, Ephes. iv. 23 : " And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." There is a renovation of the mind itself by the communion of spiritual light ; but the *spirit* of the mind, that whereby it is enlivened, led, and actuated, *that* is to be renewed also. The spirit of the mind is evidently opposed to the " old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts," or to depraved affections ; and when our affections are regulated and altered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and otherwise not at all. No other change will denominate them a spiritual renovation. Hereby what are only *natural affections* in themselves be-

come *fruits* of the Spirit in them that believe. Gal. v. 22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and temperance." They continue the same in their essence, substance, and natural powers, but are changed in their properties, qualities, and inclinations, whenever a new nature is given to them. The waters at Marah were the same waters after they were made sweet and useful, as they were before their cure, when so bitter they could not be drank. So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them. Thus our affections continue the same as they were, but are cured by grace; their properties and qualities are cleansed, and the salt by which the cure or change is wrought, is *the love of God*, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

But as multitudes delude and deceive their own souls, persuading themselves there hath been a spiritual renovation where there is none, and so think all is well, till they are wholly immersed in their former security; it greatly concerns

us to inquire, *of what nature that work is which hath been on our affections*; or what the change in them is; or whether *the renovation is real or not*. This momentous inquiry will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAP. VIII.

Pointing out the difference between a change in the affections, which will not bear the trial; and that renovation by grace which renders them spiritual.

THAT there is an important difference must be universally acknowledged; and to ascertain it, that we may not be of the number of them that are deceived to everlasting ruin, we should spare no trouble, nor suffer a moment to run waste. Mere thinking and hoping will not suffice; the difference must be examined by scripture-light, and by the experience of them that do believe in Jesus.

1. *Spiritual renovation extends itself to the whole spirit, soul and body.* 1 Thess. v. 23. When we say that we are sanctified in part only, it is not meant, that any faculty of the soul is unsanctified, but only that the work is not *absolutely perfect* in any of them. Sin may retain power in

some one affection, as anger, love, fear, &c., more than in all the rest besides ; and to which men's natural tempers, or their situation and circumstances in life, greatly contribute. Hence, some men find more difficulty in the mortification of one inordinate affection than in crucifying all others. I have known professors shining exemplarily in all other Christian graces, who have been scarce free from giving great scandal by the excess of their passion and easy provocation to it; and yet they have known, that the vigorous mortification thereof is the most eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things. The trial of our self-denial lies in the things that our natural inclinations are strongest towards. However, in spiritual renovation, there is no affection, but is sanctified ; no one is left absolutely to the service of sin : all are made meet for holy exercises and operations, and do in proper seasons exert themselves accordingly, if the mind is renewed. The grace implanted in us is called " the new man," because all the powers and faculties of the Christian are seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of sin, so

nothing is accepted from the renovation that is by grace. He, in whom *any one affection* is utterly unrenewed, hath not one graciously renewed in him. Let professors then take heed how they indulge in any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable and a strong impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to say with Naaman, "God be merciful unto me in this thing; in all others I will be for him." To be entire for God, to cleave unto him, to have the heart circumcised, to love him, is to have *all our affections* renewed or sanctified; when it is otherwise, there is a double heart, or a change which is not spiritual, because not universal. Thus there are many who are sober and temperate in most things, but the *love of money* prevails in them in a great degree, which to them "is the root of all evil." Again, some seem to be religious, but, through anger, envy, and the like, they *bridle not their tongue*; and so prove their religion is also vain. Some, likewise, who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them, and are superstitiously devout, do yet walk in the *spirit of Cain* towards the disciples of Christ; and if permitted,

would soberly and resolutely set themselves to persecute and destroy. Some *love the praise of men*, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded: and this was the vice of the ancient philosophers. By the principles of reason, and by severe exercise, they subdued their affections to great moderation about temporal things, but at the same time they were slaves to vain glory and human praise. And, in general, if men not spiritually renewed, were able to search themselves, they would find, that some of their affections are so far from having an effectual change wrought in them, that they are rather a quiet habitation for sin, and that one secret lust or other is cherished, which they must know to be pernicious to the soul. But in spiritual renovation, as just observed, every affection is sanctified according to its use in the life of God and holiness.

2. *Spiritual renovation engages the affections to fix upon, and cleave to all spiritual things in their proper places, and for proper ends.* The reason of our adherence to one is the same with respect unto all; that is, their relation unto God in Christ.

Wherefore, when the affections are renewed, the Christian makes *no choice in spiritual things*, as cleaving to some and refusing others; he adheres unto all; and an equal respect is required from us to all the commands of God. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things, so as that a man may, and ought to value one above another, as to the degrees of his love and esteẽm, although his love is to be SINCERE with respect to all. For instance,

First, *God himself*, as revealed in and by Christ, is not only the proper and adequate, but chief object of the affections as renewed. He is so, for his own sake alone; and whosoever loves not God for what he is in himself, and what from himself he is, and will be to us in Christ, (which considerations are inseparable,) that man hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. Not a few professors do in this deceive themselves, or are deceived; they suppose that they love heaven, and heavenly things, and the exercises of divine worship; but as to *God himself*, they can give no evidence of any love to him, either on account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, or

their natural relation to him and dependence on him, or on account of the manifestation of himself in Christ, and the exercise of his grace therein. But whatever be pretended, there is no love to God that proceeds not from these springs; and since all men profess they love God, we should strictly examine ourselves on what grounds our pretension is founded. Is it because we indeed see an excellency, a beauty in the glorious properties of his nature? Is it our great joy and satisfaction that God is what he is? Is it from the gracious manifestation he hath made of himself, and his perfections in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us, in and by him? If it be, then is our love generous and divine from the renovation of our affections; if not, we shall be at a loss when called to our trial. God is the first object of our affections, and

Secondly, In other spiritual things *renewed affections cleave unto them, according as God is in them.* This alone gives them pre-eminence. God is loved for himself, all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. Hence is the Lord Christ, even as to

his human nature, the object of our love and affections in such a way and degree as no other being or thing but God himself is and ought to be. Evidences of the presence of God in persons and things are the only attractives of renewed affections.

Thirdly, In all things which seem to stand in an equality, as to what is of God in them; yet, for some especial reasons, our love may be stronger to one than to another. Some *particular truth*, with grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion to God; or of our edification, or peculiar consolation. The soul will have a distinguishing respect to and value for such truths: and the same as to *Christian duties*; we may have had such an intercourse with God in some, as may give us a prevalent delight in them.

But notwithstanding these distinctions, renewed affections do cleave to *all spiritual things*, as such. The grand reason of their doing so is the same in all—*God in them*; only they have several ways or degrees of acting towards them. The spiritually minded have a regard to all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a

love to himself, and to all his ways ; which cannot be said of any beside, whatever other change may have been wrought on their affections.

3. The third difference is, *there may be a change in the affections, so as that men may delight in religious worship, and be diligent in it ; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that only gives delight in God, in the several duties of religious worship.*

Where the Gospel is publicly professed, there is great variety in the minds and practices of men about the duties of religious worship—many are stout-hearted, and despise, or wholly neglect the observance of them : some attend on them as a matter of form, or from principle of education, and probably from some convictions of their necessity ; and there are others, who are diligent in attending and greatly delight in them, (according to the way they choose,) who yet give no evidence of the renovation of their minds : for professors may be *greatly affected with the outward part of worship*, and the manner of its performance, and have no delight in what is internal and spiritual.

Many of the Jews were delighted with the preaching of Ezekiel, because of his eloquence, and the elegance of his parables. Chap. xxxiii. 31, 32. Hence they delighted, and were diligent in hearing him, and called themselves the people of God; though we find they lived in sin, and their hearts went after covetousness. The same may be the case with many in our day, with reference to the gifts of those who preach the word; not but that we may prefer one minister to another, and yet be truly sincere in our delight in the word itself. But great care is to be taken that our delight centres not in outward things, which is the case with numbers, particularly the PAPISTS. They will with much fervour, and many evidences of devotion, and sometimes with difficulty and danger, repair to their places of worship; and yet when they are present, *understand not one word*, whereby their hearts might be excited to genuine acts of faith, love, and delight in God. Pompous ceremonies, show, music, and other incentives of *carnal affections*, make great impression on, and affect them; separate these things from divine service, they

would have no delight in it; but affections spiritually renewed are not concerned in these externals: yea, if they who are renewed, should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of diverting their minds from the proper work of divine worship rather than an advantage unto them. Two persons may attend the same ordinances, with equal delight, on very distinct principles; as two men may come into the same garden, one ignorant of the nature of the various herbs and flowers, and the other a skilful herbalist; both may be equally delighted, one with the colours and smell of the flowers; but the other, with the consideration of their various natures, or their uses in medicine, and the like. Thus it may be in religious worship; one is delighted with the outward administration, another with its spiritual efficacy at the same time. However, what there is of *real order* in the worship of God, as it is an effect of divine wisdom, so it is suited and useful to spiritual affections, proceeding from the same Spirit, by whom they were internally renewed. Every thing of God's appointment is both delightful and

useful. None can say with higher raptures, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord!" than they whose affections are renewed, yet their delight terminates not in them.

Again, professors may delight in the external duties of worship, because hereby they comply with, and give *some kind of satisfaction to their convictions*. When conscience is awakened to a sense of the necessity of such duties, the mind will have no rest, no peace in the neglect of them. But let them be attended to, in the seasons which conviction and custom call for, conscience will be so far satisfied, as that the mind shall obtain present ease and refreshment. When the soul is used to this relief, it will not only be diligent in performing those duties, but it will naturally delight in them. Hence many will not omit the duty of prayer every morning who are resolved to live in sin all the day long; external duties are used by them as an antidote against the sting and poison of sin, to allay its rage, but cannot expel its venom. The performance of those duties, though it heal not their wound, it assuageth their pain, and, like

the sacrifices for sin under the law, dispelleth their present fears. But their condition is dangerous, who, when a sense of the guilt of sin returns upon them, betake themselves for relief to prayer or other duties; which having discharged, they soothe their troubled minds and cry, Peace, although they have no real sense of the pardon of sin, nor any strength against it. It may be asked, Do not the best of men perform all spiritual duties from a conviction of their necessity? **Yes;** but it is one thing to perform a duty from a conviction of necessity, as it is *God's ordinance*, (which conviction respects the mere duty,) and another thing to perform it, just to give satisfaction to a troubled mind, or to quiet conscience under its remorse for sins against heaven. This begins and ends in self; *self-satisfaction is the sole design of it.* But in the performance of duties from a conviction of their necessity, as God's ordinance, and of their use, in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends with God. It seeks no satisfaction in them, nor finds it from them, but *in and from God alone by them.*

Again, the *reputation of devotion in religious duties* insensibly affects the unrenewed mind with great diligence and delight in religious worship. However men are divided in their apprehension and practice; however different from, and contrary to each other, are their ways of worship; yet amongst all, yea in the secret thoughts of them who outwardly condemn these things, it is *a matter of reputation* to be devout, diligent, and strict, in and about the duties of religion. This greatly affects the human mind, whilst pride is secretly predominant; and the praise of men is more regarded than the praise of God. This consideration will prevail, especially on those who are concerned for the credit and honour of the particular way which they profess; they will not only be diligent themselves, but zealous in drawing others to the same observances. These principles, "their own reputation," and "that of their sect," constitute the life and soul of ancient Pharisaism; and according as the minds of men are influenced with these views, so will a delight in the duties by which their reputation is attained, grow in them.

Every such corrupt end, as is *the desire of reputation*, or the praise of men, being prevalent in the mind, will universally influence the affections to a delight in external duties, until the person be habituated to them with great satisfaction.

Again, *Superstition engages the minds of many to the most scrupulous diligence, and a delight in the performance of religious duties.* False notions and apprehensions of God, his will, nature, and operations, may befall the minds of men in all religions, true and false; it is an internal vice of the mind, and hath prompted many to such outward means of religious service, and a devout performance of those duties, as God instead of accepting, hath expressly forbidden. *Superstition* hath not only excited men to a diligent performance of external duties, but spurred them on to most prodigious attempts, almost exceeding human nature, as well as human belief; but though this proves a great change wrought on the affections, it hath not the least connexion with spiritual renovation. But

The principal reason why men, whose affections are only changed, (not spiritu-

ally renewed,) do delight in religious worship, is, *they place their righteousness before God in them, and hope for their sake to be accepted with him.* Whatever notions they may have of the righteousness of faith, or the righteousness of Christ, that which they practically trust to, is **THEIR OWN.** This discovers itself in their own breasts, on every trial that befalls them; yea, when they cry unto the Lord, and pretend to faith in Christ, they quickly prove that their principal trust is in themselves. In all that men can plead in a way of obedience, nothing hath a fairer pretence to a righteousness than what they do in the worship of God; it is what he expects at their hands; and what is done unto him in the light of their consciences: religious acts towards him are the best they can do to please him, which therefore they must put their trust in, or in nothing; and it is to be feared that many, as they fall frequently into sin, so relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences by a *multiplication of duties*, and renewed diligence in them. It is inconceivable what delight men will take in any thing that so

much as seems to contribute to a righteousness of their own ; it is suitable to, and pleaseth the principles of corrupt nature, after the man is convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This made the Jews so pertinaciously adhere to the Levitical ceremonies and sacrifices, and to prefer them to the Gospel, and the righteousness thereof. And so powerful an influence hath the desire of self-righteousness upon the minds of men in the present day, that, only persuade them, righteousness is to be attained by liberality and charity, or in the dedication of their substance to the use of the church ; though once covetous, greedy, and oppressive, they will lavish their gold out of the bag, and give up all their patrimony to attain it. In brief, it is the strongest fortification of the soul against Christ and his Gospel ; and the last reserve by which it maintains the interest of self against the grace of God.

These are the grounds and reasons of unrenewed persons delighting in religious worship, and being diligent in its duties ; and from these considerations, it may be made too manifest, that the greatest part

of the devotion that is in the world, doth not spring from *spiritual renovation*, without which it is not accepted of God. That you may clearly discover the difference between *occasionally changed* and *spiritually renewed*, I will just hint at the grounds and reasons on which “they that are Christ’s” do delight in the institutions of divine worship, and attend them with diligence.

That all whose minds are renewed have a peculiar delight in religious ordinances, is fully evident from *examples* of the saints in all ages. This hath been the great cause of their suffering persecution, and even martyrdom. If the primitive Christians would, or could have omitted the observance of them, they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries ; but they loved not their lives, in comparison to that delight which they had in observing the precepts of Christ. And as our Lord himself, upon all occasions, did declare his delight in, and zeal for the public worship of God, so the apostle, Heb. x. 25—27, gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, and what tendeth to final apostacy, “the falling into a neg-

lect of the duties of evangelical worship." This is unquestionable. But our present inquiry is, wherefore do the spiritually minded so delight in gospel ordinances; and what is it that engageth their hearts to a diligent observance of them?

(1.) In general, they love, adhere to, and delight in the ordinances of divine worship, because *they find faith, love, and other Christian graces, excited and exercised in them.* This is the first and immediate end of their institution. It is a pernicious mistake, to suppose, that any external duties of worship are appointed, or accepted for themselves; many things destructive to the souls of men have proceeded from this supposition. All instituted ordinances are but means to express and exercise faith, love, fear, trust, and delight in God: the end of all is, that through and by them we may act those graces on God in Christ; and where this is not attended to, let them be never so solemn as to their outward performance, or be performed with ever so much diligence, earnestness, and delight, they are neither acceptable to God, nor beneficial to the worshipper. This is the first ge-

neral spring of the Christians' love to divine ordinances, and of their delight in them. They have experience that in and by them, their faith and love are excited to a gracious exercise on God in Christ; for this end, ~~are~~ they ordained and blessed of God, and are the effectual means of it, when their efficacy is not defeated by unbelief. When these graces are not in exercise, outward duties are so far from being an approach unto God, that they set us at a greater distance from him, and are utterly useless and fruitless. Alas! how many professors come to ordinances, *they know not why*; and behave in them *they care not how*! They do not come to them as the means appointed for the exercise of faith in Christ, and love to him; they do not labour to stir up these graces to action, (if they possess them,) and they suffer their minds to be diverted from the great end, partly by occasional temptations, and partly by regarding only what is external in the ordinances. But the spiritually minded come unto them with the design, desire, and expectation of being directed and excited by them to the exercise of divine faith and love; and

! their design is not useless and inactive, but they diligently endeavour to be found in the exercise of them, not suffering their minds to be diverted from the pursuit of their designs; and, when they find it otherwise with them, they can have no rest in their souls.

(2.) The renewed mind cleaves unto religious ordinances, because *they are the means by which a sense of divine love and supplies of grace are communicated*. So far as the affections are renewed, this is the principal attractive. Ordinances are the means or way of approach unto God, and we do not draw nigh unto him as to a barren wilderness, where no refreshment can be obtained. To make a pretence of coming to God, and not with expectation of receiving great and good things from him, is, *to despise him*, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our souls of all benefit whatsoever. We are always to come unto God, as the eternal spring of goodness, grace, and mercy; of all that we need, and of all that we can desire, in order to everlasting felicity. And the spiritually minded do come for a sense of his love

in Christ Jesus. In this our souls live, and without it we are of all men most miserable. They who are humble and sincere in the duties of divine worship, as they look for, so do they in various measures receive this divine refreshment; the holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in them, and witnesseth their adoption unto them. If we are strangers to this, if we have never received efficacious intimations of divine love, in and by religious duties, we cannot love nor delight in them as we ought. When we delight in, and value ordinances, because we experience they are, and have been, means of communicating to us a sense and renewed pledges of the love of God in Christ, with the privileges which depend thereon: *then* are our affections renewed by the Holy Ghost.

And as God in Christ is the fountain of all grace, the spiritually minded approach unto God in the ordinances of divine worship, for supplies of grace to strengthen and comfort them. They cleave unto them as the means of God's communication of grace and spiritual strength unto their souls; and they are

the ordinary way and means by which he hath done, and will do it. The *word as preached*, is the food of our souls. 1 Pet. ii. 2 : "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." *Prayer* is the way of his appointment for our application to him, to obtain all the needful supplies he hath proposed to us in the promises of his covenant. In the *sacraments*, the same promises are sealed unto us, and the grace represented in them effectually exhibited. *Meditation* confirms our souls in the exercise of faith about it, and opens the heart for its reception. By these means, doth God communicate all supplies of grace ; and hence true believers come, and cleave unto them, that they may receive grace to enable them to live unto him in all *holy obedience*, and to get the *victory over their manifold temptations*.

(3.) As they attend religious worship, with these designs and expectations, so *they have experience of the spiritual benefits they receive thereby, which more and more engages them to, and increases their delight in it*. This, the unrenewed are strangers to ; they neither have the design before-

mentioned in coming, nor the experience of this efficacy in their attendance on ordinances. And this is the great reason why professors grow so careless, and are so negligent and lukewarm in their attendance; finding no real spiritual benefit, they become very indifferent to religious duties, and at length arrive to that frame described Mal. i. 13: "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts." They only who have a sense of the efficacy of public worship, can cleave to it with spiritual love and delight; and that secret love to, and exquisite delight in, the statutes and testimonies of God, which David expressed in Psalm cxix. arose from the spiritual benefit and advantage which he received by them, as he constantly declares. The renewed continually remember what holy impressions they have made upon them, into what engagements their souls have been brought by them, what encouragements to faith and obedience they have hereby received, and so they naturally long after a renewed sense of the enjoyments. When we do not find in ourselves this foundation of delight

in religious duties, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed.

(4.) The Christian, whose affections are spiritually renewed, delights in the duties of divine worship, because *they are the great instituted way of giving glory to God*. As they respect divine appointment, "to give glory to God," is the first and principal end of all religious duties. In them, acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the Divine nature, and of our relation to, and our dependence on him; and this is that which the Christian designs in them. The pattern set us by our blessed Saviour, in the prayer he taught his disciples, directs us to it; all the first requests concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof. Those therefore who fail in this design, err in all they do, as they never tend to the mark proposed to them. But the glory of God, is that which principally animates the souls of them that believe in all their duties. *This*, their universal relation to him, and love in that relation; makes necessary; wherefore, that way and means by which we may directly and solemnly give glory

unto God, (and such are all the duties of divine worship,) is delightful and precious unto them.

These are the chief things wherein the operations of affections spiritually renewed, differ from those which are not, as to the ordinances and duties of divine worship ; and which I pray God every reader may carefully consider, and seriously lay to heart. I proceed to a

4th Evidence of the difference between affections spiritually renewed, and those which have had only a general change wrought in them by convictions, and outward occasions ; which is, *there is an assimilation wrought in them unto spiritual and heavenly things*, BY FAITH, when renewed ; but otherwise, *the assimilation is only* BY IMAGINATION. This gives the most eminent distinction betwixt the frames of mind, whose difference we are examining. Affections spiritually renewed, are in all their operations and exercise under the guidance of faith. "We live here by faith." If our affections deviate, or decline from the conduct of faith, they degenerate from their spirituality, and go into the service of superstition ; *blind*

affections groping in the dark after spiritual things, not having the light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitious imaginations and practices, and continue to do so to this day. When FAITH goes not before the affections to discover both way and end, the soul must fall into one snare and pit, or another; wherefore affections that are renewed, move not but as faith discovers their object, and directs them to it. We can love nothing sincerely with divine love, but what we believe with faith divine. "Faith works by love." Let our affections unto spiritual things be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, nor are guided by it, they are not accepted of God, nor will they promote the interest of holiness in our souls. And this is the reason that we so often see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season; either, *they utterly decay*, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, and presently the man even wonders he should be so foolish as to be busied and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and becomes as

vile as any upon earth ; or, he takes up, and rests in a *formal profession*, and never attains to be spiritually minded. And this is the best end that our affections towards spiritual things can attain, when not guided by the light of faith.

As faith hath a clear prospect and apprehension of spiritual things, discerning them duly as they are in themselves ; so by this light we see spiritual things not in any corrupt representation or imagination of them, but as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use. This is one of the principal effects of faith, to discover to the soul, and set before the affections, things spiritual and heavenly in their nature, beauty, and genuine excellency. This attracts them, if spiritually renewed, and engages them to cleave with delight to what is so proposed to them. The end God designs, is to draw our hearts and affections unto himself ; and to this end he gives us a glorious internal light, FAITH, by which we may discern the true nature of the things that we are to pursue with love and delight, and without this, there can be nothing but *false images of spiritual things* in our minds ; not

always as to the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as to their reality, power, and efficacy. And let it be observed, that the more steady our view of spiritual things is, by faith, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving to them. And being thus led to, and fixed on spiritual things, they will *continually be assimilating unto the things themselves*, becoming more and more spiritual and heavenly. Whenever the affections cleave intensely to any object, they receive an impression from it, (as doth wax from a seal being applied to it,) which changeth them into its own likeness. So the Apostle affirms of sensual persons, "they have eyes full of adultery," 2 Pet. ii. 14; and when men are filled with the love of this world, which carries along with it all their other affections, as hopes, fears, and desires, they become earthly minded. Their minds are so changed into the image of the things themselves, as if they were made up of the earth.

In like manner, when, through faith, men discern and embrace heavenly things, they are every day more and more heavenly minded. "The inward man is renewed

day by day." Love is more sincere and ardent, delight is more sensible and ravishing, desires are more enlarged ; and by all, a taste of heavenly things is heightened into experience, animating and consolatory. See Rom. v. from the first to the fifth verse. This is the way by which one grace is added unto another in degrees. Great assimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects by this means may be attained. The mind hereby becomes the temple of God ; and Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him. Love in its proper exercise gives a mutual inhabitation. In brief, he whose affections are renewed, will be heavenly minded, and in the exercise of his affections, that heavenly mindedness will be increased. THE PATTERN which we ought continually to set before us, to which our affections ought to be conformed, is the *Lord Christ* ; the same mind and affections that were in him, should be in us, and to have our minds so affected is the principal part of our duty. THE RULE of our affections, in their utmost spiritual improvement, is the *Scripture*. The way marked out therein, is

the only channel in which the stream of spiritual affections takes its course unto God ; and as there is nothing more extravagant than the affections of men who are tintured with some devotion, if they forsake the rule of Scripture ; so there is such a measure of heavenly mindedness attainable, through exercise and diligence, to which those who pretend highly to perfection, seem utter strangers. The state of our affections, as to a due exercise on, and an assimilation unto them, may be fixed, in an *habitual suitableness to spiritual things*, upon the proposal of them ; and in *savouring* or having a sweetness and delight in them ; so making them the treasury of the soul. To *this* our affections will attain, if conformed to heavenly things, and by being fixed on them, the affections are more and more conformed, and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves. But it is not thus with such whose affections have only an occasional change wrought upon them ; on the contrary, these persons design to debase spiritual things, to bring down things heavenly to a conformity with their affections, which, however changed, are

not spiritual but carnal. And the carnal mind discerneth not the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned; it is destitute, as we have seen, of that divine light, by which they are discovered in their native beauty and glory; and where they are not thus viewed, the affections cannot cleave to them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them. Filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations about spiritual things, such persons may be, but these terminate in presumption, superstition, wickedness, and destruction.

CHAP. IX.

Assigns some reasons why the affections are not more spiritual, with instructions to such as are declining in this part of the divine life.

THERE are many, who have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual affections. In some, this vigour of spiritual affections is from the real power of grace exerting its efficacy on their hearts. In others, it is from other causes; as for instance, relief from conviction by spiritual illumination will produce this effect. And if *the change* is wrought in youth, then it is most eminent, be it of whatever kind it will; for then the affections in their natural powers are active, and bear great sway in the soul. But as men increase in age, and grow up in carnal wisdom, as earthly things are more valued by them, and their care about them enlarges, so spiritual affections abate and

decay every day. It is a shame, and folly unutterable, that it should be so with any who profess to embrace that religion, in which there are so many incomparable excellencies to endear and engage them to it more and more; but why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the sight of the sun; and what multitudes openly proclaim concerning themselves? Whilst some have vigorous, active affections towards spiritual things, and cherish them until they are assimilated and transformed into the image and likeness of these things above, many experience *no growth, vigour, or assimilation of affections*; and others fall into a *woeful decline*; their moisture becomes as the drought in summer. They have no experience of the life and operations of the affections respecting these things spiritual, nor any comfort or refreshment from them; they honour not the Gospel with any fruits of faith, love, zeal, or delight; nor are they any way useful to others, by their example. To consider these cases, I hope will be of advantage to us. And,

1. Let us attend to the *slowness and imperceptibility of the growth of our affec-*

tions, in an assimilation unto heavenly things, *with the causes thereof*. It cannot be denied, that the progress of our affections in spirituality, and their conformity to the things they are, or ought to be set upon, is too often very slow, and sometimes imperceptible. Yea, for the most part it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves, or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness; not like plants in an inclosed garden which are watered every day. But yet this is our folly, and our sin. What keeps many in this condition, is,

(1.) *The generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more than not to lose the ground they think they have gained.* This is a pernicious folly, that both ruins the glory of religion, and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is, professors have some grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope, that "they are passed from death unto life," and are in a state of favour with God. This state they will endeavour to preserve, by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and by avoiding such sins where-

by they might forfeit it ; but as for diligence and endeavours to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory, to press forwards towards the mark of their high calling, to be more holy, humble, righteous, and spiritually minded, to have their affections more and more transformed into the likeness of things above ; there are but FEW that sincerely apply themselves hereunto, or even to the means of these things. The measures, to which any professors have attained, satisfy the church to which they belong, and secure their reputation in the world ; and here they rest, speaking peace to their souls. Such persons are like unto men who live in a country in which they are not only pressed with poverty, and all sorts of misery, but also are obnoxious to punishment and death, if taken in it ; well, they are told of another country, where, *as soon as they arrive*, they shall be freed from all fear of punishment ; and if *they travel farther* into it, they shall obtain plenty, riches, honours, and a vast inheritance. On this they prepare themselves for the voyage or

journey, to obtain an entrance and possession: but no sooner do they come within the borders, and so are free from danger of punishment and death, but they sit down, and will go no farther, though such inestimable things are before them. Hence it happens that many of them, through sloth, negligence, or ignorance, rest short of the true bounds or limits of the country of liberty and peace, and danger and death surprise them unawares; which ruin could not have befallen them had they industriously endeavoured to enter into the heart of the country, and possessed the good things thereof: and at best, being *only in the borders*, they are exposed to want, and continue poor and unhappy all their days. In like manner, men under the power of convictions, and of those restless fears with which they are accompanied, will rouse themselves, and inquire how they may be delivered from the guilt and power of sin, and escape wrath and eternal misery. In the Gospel, not only mercy and pardon are proposed to them, on their believing in Christ, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but spiritual strength,

peace, and joy, on an advance or progress made in it by faith and obedience. But many, when they have attained so far as to have some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse, and are delivered from their tormenting fears, endeavour to preserve those hopes, and keep to that state, but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the great and precious things of the Gospel, by a growth in grace and spiritual affections. But what numbers of them fall under woeful mistakes! Supposing themselves to be in the Gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it. They were not far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was said of him who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the Gospel, as to pardon, mercy, deliverance, safety, and divine consolation, but by a growth in grace and holiness, which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges thereof.

It is a comely thing to see a Christian green and flourishing in spiritual affections, and it is the more lovely, because it is so rare. The generality take up with those measures which neither glorify God,

nor produce durable peace for themselves. What men pretend and complain of herein, is the *difficulty of the work*; they can (as they suppose) preserve their present station, but to press forward, this is too hard for them. But this complaint is unequal, unjust, and adds to the guilt of their sloth; it reflects on our Saviour's words, "My yoke is easy, and my burden light;" it expresseth unbelief in the promises of God, which tender such supplies of grace as to render all the ways of wisdom easy, full of mercy and peace; and it is contrary to the experience of all who have with any sincerity engaged in the ways of Gospel obedience: The whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone; *they will retain some thing or things*, which are inconsistent with a progress in spiritual mindedness; whereas the apostle tells us, Heb. xii. 1., that in this case, "we must cast off every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us," if we intend to run with joy and with success, the race that is set before us. These professors will also *dwell continually upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercises of*

grace ; some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things is always difficult ; they design not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces the perfect work. Hence the Scripture calls such persons BABES and CARNAL, compared with others, who from their activity and progress in the divine life, are styled STRONG MEN, and SPIRITUAL. The former only do what they judge necessary to them in their present circumstances ; they do not attempt a thorough work, and thus are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they will always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties as to the growth of their affections in spirituality. Remove these things, as they ought to be removed out of the way, and we shall find all the paths in which we are to walk towards God, to be pleasantness and peace. This is the *first cause* whence affections truly renewed do not thrive in assimilation and conformity to heavenly things ; men take up with their present attainments, and then pretend discouragements and difficulties in attempting spiritual growth

in the inward man; but they may thank themselves, if, as they bring no honour to Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own breasts.

(2.) As the evil proceedeth from folly, so it is always the *consequence of sin, of many sins of various sorts*. Let us not dwell on heartless complaints, that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly; nor let us hearken to this or that relief and comfort under this consideration; they may be of use when persons are under temptations, and not able to form a right judgment of themselves; but in the course of our ordinary walk with God, they are not to be attended, much less fled to for support. The general reason of this evil state is our own sinful carelessness, negligence, and sloth; with (perhaps) an indulgence to some known lust or corruption; and in vain do we seek after refreshing cordials, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we are nigh unto a lethargy, and stand in need of lancing and burnings. Time would fail to give instances of the sins which fail not to obstruct effectually the growth of spiritual affections. *But in*

general, when professors are careless as to that continual watch which they ought to keep; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as to the seasons or manner of their performance; when they are strangers to spiritual meditation and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world: or are so *tender* and *delicate* that they will not attempt the hardship of an heavenly life and conversation, either as to the inward or outward man; much more, when they are vain and corrupt in their communication, and under the predominant influence of some particular lust: it is absurd to think of thriving in spiritual affections.

And now, see you not the folly and sinfulness of this fruitless, lifeless conduct? Are you not convinced, that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spiritual mindedness? Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things heavenly, know most of its necessity, excellency, and desirableness; yea, without some advance, these things will not be known; such will testify, that the more

they attain herein, the more they see there is yet to be attained, and the more do they desire to attain what is yet behind. Phil. iii. 13, 14. But not to advance at all, is destructive to the genuine property of Gospel grace; is contrary to the invaluable promises of the sacred oracles, which are the principal supports of the faith, hope, and comfort of the Christian; is a signal contempt of the love, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, who hath given us those promises to engage us to grow and advance; is repugnant to the honour of Gospel grace, as though it would carry us so far and no farther in the way to glory; is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of the religion of Jesus in the world; and is utterly inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience.

And yet there is **THAT** which is worse than what we have now insisted on, and more opposite to the growth of affections in conformity to spiritual things. This is

2. *Spiritual decay manifesting itself in sensible and visible effects.* A little must be offered respecting this woeful condition, as it is obstructive of the assimilation of spiritual affections to heavenly things,

and directly opposite to the grace and duty of being spiritually minded.

It should be observed, that there may be a *time of temptation*, in which the soul may apprehend, not only a decay in, but an utter loss of all spiritual affections, when in fact it is the reverse. Some have judged, that the "Lord had forsaken and forgotten them," when he had not; and many under temptations have apprehended, that *they have forsaken God*, when they have not done so. A man in the night may think he hath lost his way, and be in great distress, when at the same time he is in his proper road; and thus temptation brings darkness, and often leads into mistakes, and to a false judgment in spiritual things. This I would separate from the present consideration; and should also remark, that there may be a *decay in the affections* as to their actings, at least as to the outward symptoms and effects of them, and their operations towards spiritual things may be less sensible, and yet *no decay of grace* in the affections, as renewed. But when it is so, this is a burthen to the Christian; he will have a godly jealousy over himself, lest the decays he experiences should not

be in the natural, but the spiritual man; he will labour also that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with him, as in days of old; and there will not be in him any decay of holiness of life, or remissness in religious duties; grace will in this case more vigorously exert itself in the other powers and faculties of the soul, as the *judgment* and the *will*, in approbation of, and firm adherence to spiritual things.

But when men find their affections quick, active, and intent on other things, it is in vain for them to comfort themselves, that the decays they find are in their affections as natural, and not as spiritual. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of the world, and less with the things of God; surely, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the strength of sin. Decay in spiritual affections is a woeful state, and never enough to be lamented; it is a direct contradiction to that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace; and a consumption which threatens the soul with destruction every day. And yet, is it not an evil almost *epidemical* among professors? So preva-

lent is it in many, that they seem to be utterly destitute of all spiritual life.

Now, besides all that *folly* and *sin* which we before discovered as the causes of want of growth in spiritual affections, which in this case of their decay are more abominable, there is a *multiplication of evils*, wherewith this state of mind is accompanied. It is that which of all things *Christ is most displeased with*, in churches or professors: he pities them in their temptations, he suffers with them in their persecutions, and he intercedes for them on a sudden surprisal; but he *threatens them* under their spiritual decays. Rev. ii. 4, 5, and iii. 2. He testifies his displeasure against all such, and if he be against us, who shall plead for us? It is that also wherewith, above all things, *the Holy Spirit is grieved*: it is his work to give grace an increase and progress in our souls. When a wise, tender parent hath been diligent in the use of all means for the education of a child, and after having some good hopes of him, he finds him slacken in his diligence, careless in his calling, and delighting in evil company, how much is he grieved,

how dejected and afflicted! Now, the heart of the Divine Spirit is infinitely more tender towards us than that of the most tender, affectionate parent can be towards an only child; and when he hath nourished and brought us up to some growth in spiritual affections, for us to become cold, dull, earthly minded, cleaving to the pleasures or lusts of this world, how is he grieved, how is he provoked! To grieve the Holy Spirit, and not be grieved for it, there cannot be a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

Spiritual decays are *absolutely inconsistent also with all comfortable assurance of the love of God*. As professors grow cold and decay in their spiritual affections, stupidity of conscience and security of mind grow upon them. To suppose that peace with God and a good hope of eternal life, should be consistent with an habitual decay in gracious affections, is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, and the supposition would be the bane of religion. It is impossible that many professors, whom we see and converse with, should have any solid peace with God. Do men gather figs from thorns? It is a

fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind and conversation. Nothing can be so ruinous to our profession, if not to our souls, as once to suppose it is an easy matter, a thing of course, to maintain our peace with God. God forbid, but that our utmost diligence, and continued endeavours to thrive in every grace, should be requisite thereunto. The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. Add to this the decay now described is *a dangerous symptom of an evil state*, and that those in whom it is, will at last be found to be but hypocrites. Some suppose that no man is an hypocrite, but he that pretends himself to be, in religion, what he is not; -and what he knows, or at least might easily know himself not to be: but the man who, under light, profession, gifts and duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of sincerity, he is no less a *perishing hypocrite* than the former. I do not say, that every one in whom there is a prevalent decay in spiritual affections, is an hypocrite: far be it; but I must say, that where it continues without remedy, it is such a symptom of hypocrisy, as that he

who is wise, and hath a concern for his soul, will not rest until he hath searched it to the bottom; and whoever finds himself in this wretched frame, if he rests in it without groaning, and labouring for deliverance, can have no well-grounded hopes in himself of immortality; rather he is in those paths which go down to the chambers of death.

It is a most false notion which some have entertained, "that they can easily retrieve, and deliver themselves from this state, when there is an absolute necessity for it." Every decay is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for, and to countenance itself in; and be assured, *recovery from backsliding* is the hardest task in Christianity, and of which very few make comfortable or honourable work. You will readily attend then to the following advice, suitable to those who find themselves under such decays, who are sensible of, and would be delivered from them:

1. *Remember former things*; call to mind how it was with you in the spring and vigour of your affections, and compare your present state, enjoyment, quiet,

and peace, with what they were then. This will be a great stimulative of return to God; and he himself makes it on his part a ground and reason of his return to us in mercy and love. Jer. ii. 2. Though his people are under manifold decays, he will remember their first love, with its operations and fruits in trials and temptations, and thus his compassions are moved towards them. And the way to engage God thus to remember it, is for us to remember, with longing of soul, that it were with us, as in those former days, when we had the love of espousals for God in Christ. This is the way whereby ancient saints refreshed and encouraged themselves under the greatest despondencies; so did David for instance, Ps. ~~137~~¹³⁸. 6: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." He found support and refreshment in calling to remembrance the days of old, and his songs of praise in the night, when in spiritual converse and communion with God. And I have known one, who in the depth of distress, through temptation, was going to

destroy himself; but in the very instant of ruin, was relieved and delivered by a remembrance that such a time, in such a place, he had, with intense affections towards God, poured forth his soul in fervent prayer unto him. Let the backslider then remember whence he is fallen; remember when in your lying down and rising up, you had many thoughts of God and of the things of God, and how sweet and precious they were to you; remember when you had zeal for his glory, and delight in his worship, when you poured forth your souls with freedom and enlarged affections before him, and rejoiced in the tokens of his love; remember what peace, what serenity, what joy you had, whilst it was thus with you. On the other hand, consider what you have gotten, since you have declined from the ways of God, in any measure or degree: dare to deal plainly with yourselves: is not all your intercourse with heaven, either form, custom, and selfishness; or attended with anxieties and fears? Do you truly know either how to live, or how to die? Are you not sometimes doubtful, tossed to and fro, restless and

disquieted? *You must*, unless hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What have all your new lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God, Christ, and spiritual things? Speak plainly, have they not defiled, wounded, weakened, distressed you, and brought you into that condition that you know not what you are, nor to whom you do belong? What are your thoughts when you are most yourselves; do you not sometimes pant inwardly, and say, "O that it were with us as in former days!"

If you are no way affected with the remembrance of former things, then either you were never spiritually renewed, and so never had any real communion with God in religious duties; or you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and there is now no way left to make an impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in religion, but the fear of hell and trouble of duties.

As for those to whom this frame is a burden, there is no means more effectual to stir them up to endeavours after deliverance, than a *continual remembrance*

of former things, of those experiences they have had of holy communion with God. This will revive, quicken, and strengthen the things that are ready to die.

2. We should consider also, that though there are many threatenings in Scripture against *backsliding* and *backsliders*, yet there are peculiar calls and promises also to those that are in such a state; and know assuredly, that upon your compliance or non-compliance with them, depends your everlasting blessedness or woe. Attend to that divine call and promise in *Jer.* iii. 12—14. Add to it also the blessed promise, *Hos.* xiv. 4.: “I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from them.” If you design to live and not die, it must be by yielding obedience unto this call, and pleading this promise before God, mixing it with faith. Here lies your great encouragement and direction, herein is your only relief. As you value your souls, defer not the duty to which you are called, one moment; you know not how soon you may be out of the reach of calls and of promises; and he that can hear them without

stirring up himself sincerely and ardently to comply with them, hath already made a great progress towards that length.

3. As for such persons, who on these considerations do not only desire, but will endeavour also to retrieve themselves from this condition, I shall at present give no advice but this, **BE IN EARNEST.** As the prophet speaks in another case, if you will return, *return and come*, make thorough work of it: at one time or other you must do so, or you will perish. Why not now? Why is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it? It were easy to multiply all sorts of arguments to this purpose. Trifling endeavours, occasional resolutions and attempts, (like the early cloud and morning dew,) shifting with warnings and convictions by renewed duties, until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your souls. Unless there be *universal diligence and permanency in your endeavours*, you are undone. Ye shall assuredly know the Lord, if you follow on to know him. Though the progress of our affections, in conformity to spiritual and heavenly things, may be slow, imper-

ceptible, yea, totally obstructed for a season; and not only so, but through our negligence, sloth, and sin, may fall under decays, and the soul thereby be guilty of backsliding from God; yet if they are spiritually renewed, in the diligent use of means, they will grow up into an holy assimilation to those things on which they are set, and become more spiritual and heavenly every day.

CHAP. X.

Shewing the proper objects on which spiritual affections are set, with the reasons of their adherence to them.

WE now come to the *second thing*, requisite to our being spiritually minded ; namely, the OBJECT about which our affections are conversant, and to which they do adhere. What this object is, or what are the spiritual things upon which our affections are to be set, hath been indeed already declared, when treating of the objects of our thoughts and meditations ;* they are the same : yea, the fixing of our affections upon them, is the spring and cause of our thoughts about them. As *all things in religion*, both respecting faith and practice ; as *heaven*, and the things that are above—*eternal things* ; as *Christ* in his mediatorial character and glory at

* In chap. iv. v.

the right hand of God ; as *God*, the fountain whence all spiritual things proceed ; *his being and divine attributes*, with all the *distinguishing relations* he hath taken on himself towards his people, are the PROPER OBJECTS of our thoughts, so are they of our affections : therefore, we will proceed to inquire into the true notion of spiritual things, or what it is which renders them the formal, proper objects of spiritual affections, and is the reason of their adherence to them. For men may have false notions of spiritual things, under which they may like and embrace them with unrenewed affections.

1. The first consideration of heavenly things, under which renewed affections do with satisfaction and delight cleave unto them, is, as they have an *infinite beauty, amiableness, and goodness in them*, alone able to give complacency and rest. Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul ; but it cannot be fixed on any object without an apprehension (either true or false) of an amiableness and desirableness in it, from a suitable goodness to all its desires. To have our affections to cleave to spiritual

things in a due manner, it is requisite that we apprehend, and do find a goodness, a beauty, and thence an amiableness and desirableness in them. Many pretend to love God and spiritual things, but they know not why. They know well enough why they love other things, but why they love God they cannot tell; they are afraid of him, and suppose they ought to love him, and therefore pretend so to do, though they know they do not: they do but flatter him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. Many have a traditional apprehension that they ought to love God; they know no reason why they should not, and know it will be ill for them if they do not, and *these* take it for granted that they really do. Oh, how few are there who have that spiritual discernment and apprehension of the Divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him! And yet this is the ground of all real love unto God.

Possibly, some cannot say that a distinct apprehension of these things was the

first foundation and cause of their love to God ; and yet are satisfied that they do love him with all their souls. And they may not be deceived ; for God sometimes casts the skirt of his love over the heart of a poor sinner, and thus efficaciously draws it to himself, by a mere sense of the love it hath received, without a *distinct apprehension* of the things mentioned. When God hath shed abroad his love in the soul, it follows after him with all its affections. But if we would have refreshing evidences of our love unto God, as sincere ; if we would have it flourish, be fervent and constant, we must exercise ourselves unto the contemplation of the Divine goodness, and of its suitableness to our souls in and by Jesus Christ. It is impossible to cleave to any spiritual thing whatever with sincere affections, but under the notion “that it hath a real worth or excellency in itself,” and also, “that it is suitable and desirable unto us.” And it is mournful to see how many walk at random in profession, who know neither what they do nor where they go.

As to fix our affections on spiritual

things in a due manner, we must discern an *absolute goodness* in them ; so we must see it *comparatively*, as respecting all other things, by which they have a preference in our affections before and above them all. The trial of love lies in the *prevailing degree*. If we love father, mother, wife, children, houses, lands, money, more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any *equality* allowed in this matter ; we may not equally love temporal and spiritual things ; if we love not Christ, more than all those things, we love him not at all. Wherefore, that our affections may cleave to things spiritual and heavenly, we must see an excellency in them, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever. This is the only stable foundation of all divine affections ; *a spiritual view and judgment of a goodness, an excellency in them, infinitely above whatever is in the most desirable things of this world.*

If the affections of many high pretenders to religion were weighed in this balance, I fear they would be found light and wanting. However, it is the duty of them who would not be deceived in this matter of eternal importance, to examine what is

that goodness and excellency in spiritual things for which they desire and esteem them. Let not any deceive themselves with vain pretences. Whilst their valuation of present enjoyments doth evidently engage all their affections, care, diligence, and industry ; and they are cold, formal, negligent about spiritual things ; we must say, " How dwelleth the love of God in them ? " Much more, when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time, and the vigour of their spirits, but sacrificing their consciences also to the attaining of dignities, honours, wealth, and ease in the world ; who know in their own hearts that they partake of the Lord's Supper, and perform other religious duties with respect to temporal advantages ; it is hard to conceive how it is possible such should discern and approve of a goodness and excellency in spiritual things above all others.

It should be considered also, that all spiritual things do proceed from, and are resolved into an *infinite fountain of goodness* ; hence renewed affections find full satisfaction in them, and obtain absolute rest. It is otherwise as to all temporal

things; all of them together cannot compose the mind in rest and peace for one hour: hence they are called broken cisterns that will hold no water. Let a man prize them at the highest rate possible for a rational creature to be seduced unto, of which there have been prodigious instances; let him possess them in abundance, beyond whatever any man enjoyed in this world; let him be assured of the utmost peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them, that his and their natures are capable of; yet he could not dare to pretend that all his affections were filled and satisfied with them, or that they afforded him perfect rest and peace. Should he do so, the working of his mind every day would convince him of his falsehood and his folly. But all spiritual things are derived from, and do lead to that which is infinite; which is therefore able to fill all our affections, and to give them full satisfaction with rest and peace. They all lead us to the fountain of living waters, the eternal spring of goodness and blessedness; and though we cannot attain to a full rest and satisfaction in this life, yet the more we contemplate spiritual

things, and the more firmly we adhere to them, the nearer approaches we make to our rest and centre.

2. Spiritual things are to be considered as *filled with divine wisdom*. God's essential wisdom is one of the most amiable excellencies of his holy nature; and all spiritual truths, all things by which God reveals himself unto men; and all the ways and means of our approach to him in faith and obedience through Christ Jesus, are filled with divine wisdom. Now wisdom in itself, and in all its effects, is attractive of rational affections. A wise and good man commands the affections of others, (unless it be their interest to hate and oppose him, as commonly it is,) and where there is true wisdom in the conduct of civil affairs, sober men cannot but approve of, like, and delight in it: and so is divine wisdom attractive of spiritual affections. The Psalmist admired and delighted in the works of God, because "he hath made them all in wisdom." The characters of divine wisdom which are upon them, engage the soul to a delightful contemplation of them. But all the treasures, all the

glory of this wisdom, are displayed in the great spiritual things of the Gospel, in the mystery of God in Christ, and in the dispensation of his grace unto us by him; the consideration hereof fills the souls of real Christians with holy admiration and delight, and they accordingly cleave unto them with all their affections.

But this wisdom of God is foolishness to the greatest part of mankind; it was so of old, as the apostle testifies, 1 Cor. i., and it continues yet to be; therefore is the mystery of the Gospel despised by most that enjoy it; and no man ever will have any spiritual affections to spiritual things who hath not a spiritual view of the wisdom of God in them. When our minds discern and are raised to an admiration of infinite wisdom in divine revelation, then will our affections cleave unto the things that are revealed.

3. The acting of our affections in their adherence to spiritual things is *perfective of our present state and condition*. There is nothing more vile, more contemptible, more like to beasts in brutality, and to hell in punishment, than is the condition of them who have given up their affec-

tions and enslaved their natures to things earthly and sensual; but the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects is perfective of our present state; not that we can attain perfection by it, but therein our souls are in a progress towards perfection. By how much vile affections fixed on, and pursuing things carnal and sensual, do debase our nature beneath its rational constitution; so much do spiritual affections fixed on and cleaving to things spiritual and heavenly, *exalt our nature* above its mere natural capacity, making an approach to the state of angels, and of just men made perfect; the mind is elevated and enlightened with true wisdom and understanding. Again, as the power of carnal affections fills the soul with tumult, disorder, shame, and fear, (unless men are utterly profligate,) and the mind and conscience is a very hell for confusion and troubles; so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things within in peace and order. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Whence are all the disorders in your minds, whence your vexations, disquietude, and unruly

passions? Are they not from hence, *from your lusts*, the disorderly affections that prevail in you? Search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles do arise: but some are never in such confusion as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly things hath quite another tendency and effect; it so unites the mind to them, it so engages them to it, as that all the powers and faculties are in a progress towards their perfection. True wisdom, with soundness of judgment, holiness in the affections, liberty in the will, power in the heart, peace in the conscience, do in their measures all ensue hereon. But whatever tastes we may have of these things, whatever temporary experience we have of them, they will not flourish in, they will not abide with us, in any constancy, unless we are thus spiritually minded.

4. In the *future enjoyment of the present objects of our spiritual affections doth our eternal blessedness consist*. All men who are convinced of a future eternal state, do desire, when they depart hence,

to enter into blessedness and glory; and yet, with what blessedness is, even as to the general nature of it, but few do know, and if they did, they would not know how to desire it. Heaven, or blessedness, is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we are here to love, and to delight in; of that which is the object of our affections as spiritually renewed. Herein, how few have either interest or concern! But this is that which giveth life to the affections of real Christians; they know that in the enjoyment of God in Christ doth consist their eternal blessedness. How this is their happiness and glory, how it will give them an everlasting overflowing satisfaction and rest, they understand by the first-fruits which they here receive. This is the *ultimate object* of their affections in this world, and the more they are fixed and exercised upon them, the nearer approaches they make unto this blessed state. The more we love God, the more we are like unto him, and nearer to the enjoyment of him.

CHAP. XI.

*Of the way of the soul's application to
spiritual objects by its affections.*

HAVING considered the nature of spiritual affections as renewed by grace, and under what notions they cleave unto their proper objects, we come to inquire,

III. Into the way or manner of their application to those objects, which is an essential branch of spiritual mindedness. This shall be described in a few particulars.

1. It is necessary that our adherence to all spiritual things, be not only with love and delight, but FIRM AND STABLE. The affections are the powers and instruments of the soul, by which it applies and cleaves to any object whatever; and this is their nature and use with reference to things spiritual. *Transient thoughts* of spiritual things, with vanishing desires, may arise from present convictions, as they did with them who cried out, "Lord, give us ever-

more of this bread," and immediately left him. Such thoughts and desires are common to all sorts of men, yea, to the worst—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But affections which are transient, unstable, and vanishing as to their exercise and operations; affections on and off; earnest for a little while, and then cold and indifferent, are without a doubt *INSINCERE*, and can have no transforming efficacy upon the soul. Let none therefore please themselves with the operations of transient affections respecting spiritual things, be they never so urgent, pleasant, or frequent in their returns; they have deceived multitudes. If our affections unto spiritual things are *SINCERE*, where they are the true, genuine application of the soul, they are at all times *firm and stable*. Love and delight are kept to such a constant exercise, as renders them immoveable; and to this we are exhorted, 1 Cor. xv. 58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

2. It is required that the *soul hath a savour to the things* to which it adheres. The affections are the palate of the soul, by which it tastes of all things, either received or refused; and it will not long cleave to any thing which the affections do not relish. When a man is pleased with spiritual things and exercises, as in the palate with suitable and proper food, and also finds internal nourishment and comfort from them, then doth he adhere to them in a due manner. This *spiritual taste* is the ground of all experience; it is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried or tasted; this makes us to long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and strengthens faith as to what we pray for and expect.

As a man under a languishing sickness, or when chastened with strong pain, so as that his soul abhorreth bread and his daily meat, can remember what appetite he had, and with what gust he was used in the days of health to receive his food, which makes him to know that there is such a condition, and to desire a restoration to it; so is it with a sin-sick soul: it finds no savour, no sweetness in spiritual things, yet doth it remember former

days, when they were very sweet unto him; and if he hath any spark of spiritual life remaining, it will stir him up to seek with all diligence after a recovery. Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious, and experienced a relish in the word and ordinances of God? If we have not, it is to be feared we never yet had the least sincere love to spiritual things. If we have, how is it we can rest one moment, if under spiritual decays, without endeavours after healing and restoration?

3. It is necessary that our affections be so set on spiritual things, as to be a *continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations*. No man can be so forsaken of reason, as to suppose that he hath any sincere affections for what he thinks but little on, or not at all; or that he can have a true affection for any thing which will not excite and generate continual thoughts about it. Let men try themselves as to their relations, or their pleasures and enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. All men who pretend to love God, Christ, and spiritual things, and yet know in their own hearts that they very

little think of, or meditate upon them, may be assured both their pretence and religion are vain. Where our affections are sincere, and duly placed on heavenly things, so as to denominate us spiritually minded, they will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations.

4. When our affections are thus applied to spiritual things, they will be *prevalent and victorious against all solicitations and allurements to draw them off to any other objects*. The great work of all our spiritual foes, is to tempt and divert our affections from their proper object. Such are Satan's injection of blasphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will; and the distresses to which he reduces the Christian, through darkness and misrepresentations of God, and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of our enemies, is, the soliciting of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our love towards them, evil and sinful. Of the first, are all sensual pleasures, as drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering, and wantonness; of the latter, is all our inordinate love unto self, families,

the world, or the things of it. Herein consists the nature and efficacy of most of those temptations with which we have to conflict. Hereby do our enemies endeavour to beguile us, with fair and false representations of other beloveds, that our hearts should not be preserved as a chaste virgin in all their affections for Christ.

It is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the specious pretences wherewith we are solicited; and too many are deluded and ruined by giving place unto them. It is no ordinary, no easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady in their vigorous adherence to spiritual things. Watchfulness, daily examination of ourselves, prayer, and the exercise of faith, are requisite hereunto; and for want of a proper attention to these things, and with a respect to this end, "the preservation of our spiritual affections in their integrity," many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigour of spiritual life.

5. Affections fixed upon things spiritual and heavenly, *will give a great relief against the remainders of that vanity of mind* with which the Christian is often

perplexed. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, and the irregularity of the thoughts, are a continual burden to the real disciple of Christ. And nothing can give the soul any relief herein, nothing can give bounds to the endless vanity of foolish imaginations, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil barren as to their maintenance and production, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual vigorous exercise on heavenly things. This will insensibly take off that relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them insipid—sapless to the whole soul. This will so place the cross of Christ in particular on the heart, as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savour, which it before made use of to solicit and tempt our minds unto it.

Moreover, this frame of spirit, and this alone, will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means, by which the vanity of the mind is cherished and excited. Such are the roving of the out-

ward senses, especially that of the eye ; hence the Psalmist prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." If the eyes rove after vain objects, the mind will ruminate upon them ; and another holy man affirms, that he had made a covenant with his eyes, to keep them from fixing on such objects as might solicit lust or excite corrupt affections. Of the same nature with the outward senses is the incessant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itself is evil continually. This is the food of a vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world. Add to these, the sundry occasions of life and common conversation are usually turned or abused to the same end, to the exciting and exercising the vanity of the mind. But our affections are fixed on spiritual things, if our minds will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all these things, that the vanity they so abhor may have no place. And let it be remembered, that without this prevalency in the mind, a work of mortification will never be carried on in the soul.

CHAP. XII.

Displaying the happy fruits of grace and duty of spiritual mindedness.

HAVING largely, and I hope clearly, and agreeable to the divine records, stated and explained both the grace and duty of spiritual mindedness, I would now attempt some description of the blessings flowing from, and connected therewith; they are **LIFE** and **PEACE**. Two things are here to be considered.

I. What is meant by life and peace.

II. In what sense spiritual mindedness is life and peace, and what it contributes to them.

1. To be spiritually minded is **LIFE**. The spiritual life of which we are made partakers in this world, is threefold.

(1.) There is the *life of justification*. Therein the just by faith do live, as freed from the condemnatory sentence of the law. Rom. v. 18: "The righteousness of

one comes on all that believe to justification of life." It gives unto all true believers in Christ, a right and title to life. But this is not the life here intended; this depends on the sovereign grace of God by Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us.

(2.) There is a *life of sanctification*. As life, in the foregoing sense, is opposed to death spiritual, respecting its guilt, and the condemning sentence with which it is accompanied; so in this it is opposed unto spiritual death, respecting its internal power and efficacy in the soul. This is that life wherewith we are quickened by the spirit of Christ, and the life to which the apostle plainly refers in the text. In the four first verses of the chapter he described the life of justification in its nature and causes; and in the following, he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of sanctification, by which we are freed therefrom. And to be spiritually minded is this life, in that it is the *principal effect and fruit of it*. The life itself consists in the communication of a principle of life, or of faith and obedience to the powers of the soul, enabling us to

live unto God. To be spiritually minded cannot be this life formally, but it is that in which the power of this principle of life doth first and chiefly exert itself. All exertions of grace, all duties of obedience, internal and external, do proceed from this spring and fountain. Nothing is acceptable unto God, but what is influenced by, and is an effect of it; but it principally exerts its virtue and efficacy in rendering our minds spiritual, which if not effected, of it we are utterly destitute. The immediate work of the principle of life in our sanctification, is to renew the mind and make it spiritual, and will gradually carry it on to that degree which is here called being spiritually minded.

It should be observed, also, that spiritual mindedness is the *proper evidence of this life*. The communication of the life of sanctification being by an almighty act, is not so easily discernible, as to help us to make a right judgment of it from its essence or form. But where things are in themselves indiscernible, we may know them by their proper and inseparable fruits, which are there-

fore often called by the names of the essence or form itself. Such is the being spiritually minded, with respect to the life of sanctification; it is an inseparable property thereof, and whereby it infallibly evidences itself unto them who possess it. In these respects, as it is the principal effect, and the proper evidence, spiritual mindedness, is the life of sanctification.

(3.) Life is taken for the *comforts and refreshments of life*. So speaks the apostle, 1 Thess. iii. 8: "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." Now our life will do us good; we have the comforts and joys of life; and these are more life, than life itself. These make life both pleasant and desirable, and is what the apostle principally intended in the expression. It is life, a cheerful joyous life, a life worth the living. In explication and confirmation of which, the apostle added, that to be spiritually minded is also peace.

PEACE is twofold.

(1.) *General and absolute*; "peace with God through Jesus Christ," which is the original spring and fountain of all

consolation to the Christian. But this is not what was here intended, for justification is the immediate cause and ground of this peace, not our sanctification. Peace with God through the blood of Christ, is one thing, and peace in our own breast is another. The influences of the Holy Spirit in witnessing to our adoption, &c. are required unto the former; but our own activity and diligence in duties, and the exercise of all grace, are requisite to the latter.

(2.) Peace signifies, and is here to be taken for a *peculiar fruit of the spirit*; consisting in a quietness and composure of mind even amidst difficulties, temptations, troubles, and such other things as are apt to fill us with fears, disquietude, and despondency. This is that which keeps the soul in its own power, free from transports by fears or passions; and is influenced and kept alive by the contemplation of the love of God in Christ, and its divine fruits. As peace, in its primary idea, includes an *inward freedom* from those troubles to which the Christian is outwardly exposed, so there are two things from which we are secured by that

peace which is an effect of being spiritually minded.

First, *from offences*. Of the danger of these, we are often warned in the Scriptures. All ages, all times and seasons, are filled with them, and they prove pernicious to the souls of many. Such are the scandalous divisions that are among Christians; the endless differences of opinions in religion, and diversity of modes and practices in the worship of God; the falls, the sins of some professors, and the fearful ends of others; the reproaches that are cast on all that engage in any peculiar way of holiness and strictness of life; these are OFFENCES, by which numbers are either disquieted, or infected and subverted. Against any noxious influence on our minds from these things we are secured by this peace. Psalm cxix. 165: "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." To love the law or word of God, is the chief part of our being heavenly minded; yea, virtually it comprehends the whole. And they that do thus love the sacred oracles, none of the things before-mentioned, nor any other of the

like nature, shall be an offence, or cause of their falling into sin; the reason is, because they have such an experience in themselves of the truth, power, efficacy, and holiness of the Gospel, as that the miscarriages of professors shall never be to them an occasion of being offended at Christ. It is a sign of a very evil frame of heart, when men on suffering loss in their temporal concerns by the evil conduct of professors, are led to cast reflections on that religion which they profess, professing the same themselves.

Secondly, By this peace, the Christian is secured, composed under *the frowns of the world, persecutions, and afflictions of all sorts*. It is known by all, too well known, with what dejection and disquietude these things are apt to fill the human mind; what fears, troubles, and sorrows they reflect upon us. Against all these effects, this peace gives us security; it preserves to us a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our conflict with them.

Life and peace, as here joined together, do comprise a holy frame of heart and mind; in which the believing soul finds quietness, rest, refreshment, and delight

in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offences, and sufferings. The soul is so fixed in its trust in God and love to Christ, as not greatly to be cast down or disordered with any thing that befalls it; the life and peace it possesses, gives the Christian satisfaction and cheerfulness in himself, though he walks in the valley of the shadow of death. Spiritual mindedness will give life and peace under all occurrences.

2. Our next inquiry is, *how this spiritual mindedness is life and peace?* Or what it contributes to them, and how it produceth the frame of heart and mind so expressed; and this it doth several ways.

(1.) It is the only means, on our part, *of retaining a sense of divine love.* The love of God, as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the first and only foundation of all durable comforts; this God communicates by an act of sovereign grace, for the most part without any preparation for it in ourselves. "He creates the fruit of the lips, peace, peace." But although divine love be in itself unchangeable, yet a sense of it in our breasts may be lost, which David and others found by woeful experience. There is not

any thing in which our care and diligence are more concerned, than in retaining a refreshing sense of the love of God to us. For any who (through the riches of divine grace) have tasted of its consolations and joys, to be negligent in cherishing and preserving it, is a provocation of which at one time or other they will be deeply sensible; and yet there are few professors but what have too much reason to bewail their folly in this respect. Every intimation of divine love is an inestimable jewel, which, if safely treasured up in the heart, adds to our spiritual riches; but being lost, will sooner or later affect us with deep sorrow. The great means of retaining a sense of the love of God in us, the only spring of life and peace to the soul, is this grace and duty of being spiritually minded, which is evident from the very nature of the duty: hereby the soul is preserved in a frame meet to receive and retain the impressions of divine love; the thoughts and affections are fixed upon the grace and love of God, which is one great means whereby this treasure is preserved. A person spiritually minded, and he alone, will duly value and prize

all the intimations and pledges of divine love; and he only will know how to use and improve them. They are gracious provisions wherewith we are furnished, to help us in all our duties, conflicts, and trials; and on all occasions are they to be called over, and produced for our spiritual relief and encouragement. Thus they are safely retained; in the due improvement of them they grow brighter in our minds every day, and are ready for use, in which posture they are safely preserved.

(2.) This frame of mind *casts out all principles and causes of trouble and disquietude* which are inconsistent with life and peace. It will cast out all *filthiness* and *superfluity of naughtiness* from our minds; this stands in direct opposition to our being spiritually minded, and where it is, there is neither life nor peace. Where unclean lusts of the flesh and of the mind are absolutely predominant, the soul is not only like a troubled sea, but there is a hell within of darkness and confusion, and of enmity against God, Now the very nature of this grace, and its universal exercise, is suited to the casting out of all the relics of this filthiness and

superfluity of naughtiness. It brings a principle into the mind directly contrary to that from whence they proceed ; all the exercises of it, which we have described, have a direct tendency to the extirpation of these things which ruin life and peace, nor will they be any other way cast out. If the mind be not spiritual it will be carnal.

Moreover, that *disorder* which is by nature in the affections and passions of the mind, and which is directly opposite to spiritual life and peace, is cast out, or cured hereby. It were an easy task to shew how the disorder of our affections and passions is destructive of life and peace. The contrariety that is in them, and contradiction to one another ; their violence, impetuosity, and restlessness ; their readiness to receive provocations on all occasions, and frequently on none at all, are sufficient evidences. Now the nature and principal effect of spiritual mindedness is, to bring all the affections and passions of our minds into that holy order in which they were created. And wherein this order falls short of that perfection which it had originally, (for the

remains of that disorder which sin introduced will still continue,) it is recompensed by the actings of that grace communicated to us. Hereby are life and peace brought into our souls, and preserved in them.

(3.) By spiritual mindedness, *our hearts and minds are taken off from the world, and an inordinate love to it.* Where there is an inordinate love to the world, there is neither life nor peace; every excess in it both weakens spiritual life and disturbs, yea, destroys all solid spiritual peace. Wherefore to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because it subdues and expels that inordinate love to present things which is destructive of both and inconsistent with them.

(4.) It *preserves the mind in a proper, holy frame in the performance of all other duties.* This is indispensably requisite to the preservation of life and peace, and especially to the improvement of them. They will not abide, much less flourish, in any persons who are negligent in the duties of religion, or who do not perform them in a due manner. Spiritual mindedness is an antidote against the chief

things which impede or hinder us in a profitable attendance on holy duties. For instance,

Distraction of thoughts and mind hath this evil effect, and the evil will not be cured by observing any particular directions; there must be a change of the whole frame of our minds. Nothing can give us relief herein, but a prevalent delight in spiritual exercises. It is this frame alone, namely, spiritual mindedness, that creates this delight; the renewed mind and spiritual things are so suitable to each other, that on every occasion they are ready for mutual communion, and will not be separated. The distractions so much complained of, proceed from the mind's not being fixed on spiritual things with delight; hence it is easily diverted from them, and will sometimes seek occasions for such diversions.

Again, *Despondency in religious duties* arises from the frequent incursions of the guilt of sin; and the sole cure hereof is also by this grace and duty. To be spiritually minded, we have before proved, is the great preservative against these dis-

heartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's watch and guard against them, from whatever quarter they proceed : no lust or corruption can be prevalent in a spiritual mind. Again,

Weariness in and of spiritual duties abate their tendency to the improvement of life and peace in us ; and the principal cure hereof, lies in that delight in spiritual things which spiritual mindedness gives to the soul. Where there is a constant delight in any thing, there will be no weariness ; at least, not such as shall hinder the Christian from cleaving firmly to the things in which he delights ; whilst this delight therefore prevails in the mind, weariness cannot assault it. And let it be observed, that a spiritual frame of mind is the only relief against that weariness which arises from the weakness of the flesh ; for, as it will preserve the mind from attending too much to the cry, " Spare thyself," by filling the thoughts with other things ; so it will offer a holy violence to the complaints of the flesh, silencing them with a sense of and delight in holy duties.

Another thing which defeats us of the benefit of holy duties, is, *Grace is not ready for its due and proper exercise.* The seasons for religious exercises are come, a sense of duty excites men to an attendance on, and the performance of them. But when they engage in them, the graces of faith, love, fear, delight, &c., wherein the soul, the being of them consist, are wanting, out of the way, or not ready for a due exercise; hence many do satisfy themselves with the mere outward performance. The heart hath been taken up with other things, due preparation hath been wanting, and so men come to religious duties with thoughts full of earthly things, and it is no easy matter in, or just after emerging from such a frame, to stir up grace to a proper exercise. But herein is the very life of being spiritually minded; its nature is to keep and preserve all graces in a readiness for exercise, as occasions may require. This is an effectual way by which spiritual mindedness becomes life and peace; they cannot be attained, they cannot be preserved, without such a constancy and spirituality

in holy duties as we shall never arrive at, unless spiritually minded. But,

(5.) This frame of mind brings the soul, and *keeps it at the nearest approaches to heaven and blessedness*; which are the eternal springs of life and peace. According to the degrees of this grace in us, such are those of our approaches unto God: nearness unto him gives us our initial conformity unto him, by the renovation of his image in us; and our presence with him will give us perfection therein, for when we see him, we shall be like unto him. Oh! the peace, joy, and felicity which await the spiritually minded, at the right hand of God.

And now, behold good and evil, peace and wrath, life and death, have been set before you. You have had the carnal and the spiritual mind laid open; and can be no longer ignorant of the path of life which leads to the throne of God. You cannot but know which is the most desirable frame of mind, and which is attended with the happiest fruits both here and hereafter. The carnally minded do indeed flatter themselves with liberty,

pleasure, peace, and joy; but neither of them is to be found in minding the things of the flesh and of the world. None are greater slaves, or held in more abject bondage; none are greater strangers to peace, joy, happiness, and the real comforts and enjoyments of life, than are the carnally minded. Setting aside the different recompenses in the other world, spiritual mindedness in its nature and effects as to this life, as much exceeds the opposite frame of mind as light doth exceed darkness, or heaven the bottomless pit. There is a pleasure, a satisfaction, a joy and peace in minding spiritual things, which is unspeakable, and which a stranger intermeddles not with. The *carnally minded* are often as the troubled sea, through the vicissitudes of the present state; and through earthly cares and disappointments cannot rest, but their waters cast up mire and dirt, till with piercing anguish, and without any hope, their trembling spirits leave the body and sink into eternal oblivion and misery. The *spiritually minded*, on the contrary, enjoy a divine calm; in every dispensation of

Providence their heart is fixed, trusting in God. To live, they desire for no other end than to bring forth fruit unto God; and as the heart is weaned from earthly things, the loss of them doth not sink deep; they can easily bear either to part with, or to be parted from them. What they chiefly covet is, the loving kindness of God, spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and some foretaste of those rivers of pleasure which glide through the paradise of their heavenly Father. Enjoying these, they cannot but lightly esteem the momentary pleasures of this world, and must long to be put in possession of that kingdom, where their peace and joy shall be full, where the sun shall no more go down upon them, and the days of their mourning and conflict shall be ended. To this blessed state, how can we but henceforth daily aspire? For the enjoyments and employments thereof, may we be continually preparing, by an humble walk with God, by a life of faith on Christ, and by having our affections and conversation in heaven; thus shall we not only prove ourselves of the

number of the spiritually minded, but shall assuredly leave the world as conquerors, and obtain a crown of eternal life.

THE END.

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